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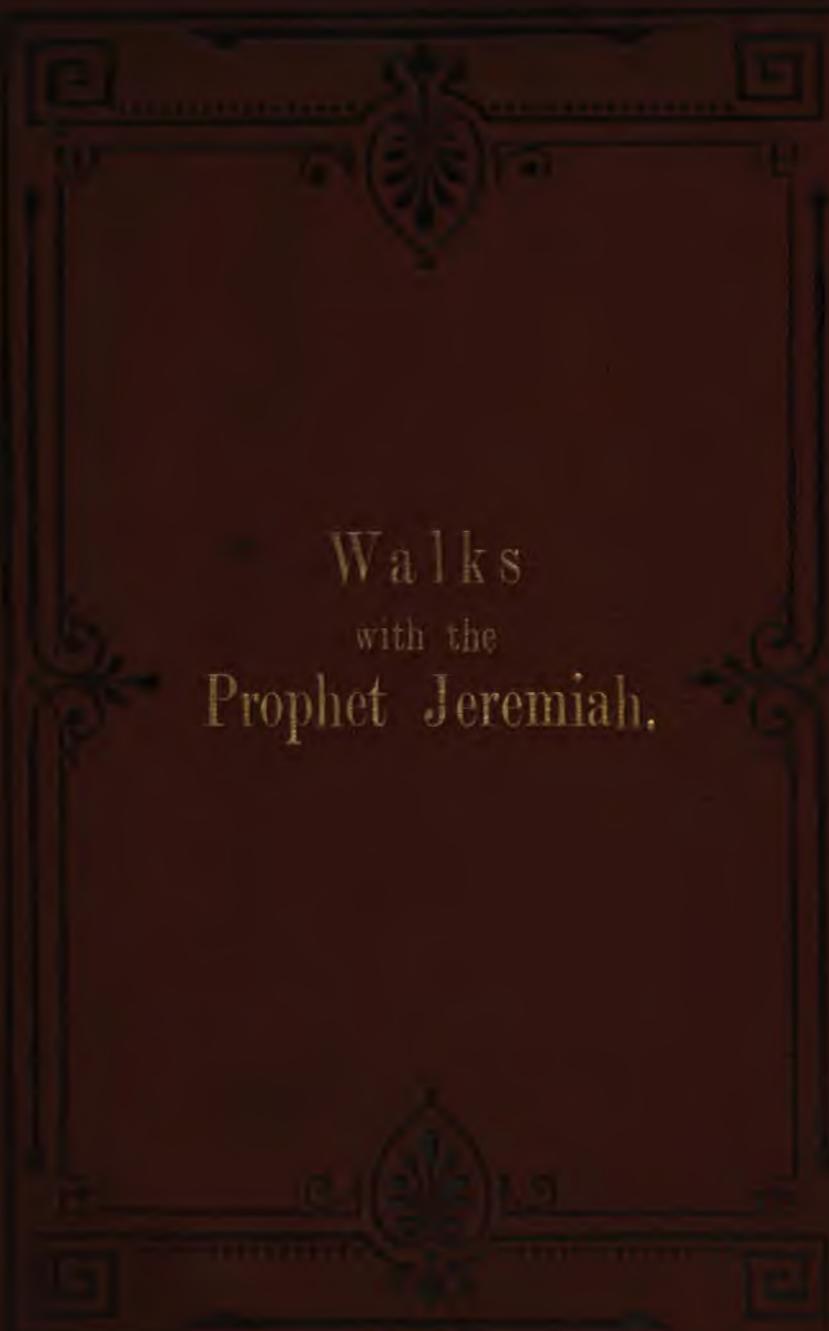
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MORNING AND EVENING WALKS

WITH

THE PROPHET JEREMIAH.



MORNING AND EVENING WALKS

WITH

THE PROPHET JEREMIAH.

BY THE

REV. D. PLEDGE.

"He that walketh with wise men shall be wise."



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P R E F A C E.

THE title of this book is derived from the fact that during the last two years the Author has devoted his mornings and evenings to the study of the Book of the prophet Jeremiah. He has listened attentively to the Divine utterances of the Seer, and has commented on those which appeared to him the most suggestive of useful thought.

These morning and evening walks are a continuation of a series of meditations in which the Author has been engaged, from the time that his physical infirmities rendered it necessary that he should resign the pastoral office.

Beginning with the Book of Job, the Author in his first volume went carefully through that Book, and the Book of Psalms, and selected choice portions therefrom, on which he dotted down a few brief thoughts.

Finding that the book found favour with re-

viewers, and was well received by the Christian public, he was induced to prepare a second volume, which contains meditations on texts taken from Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, and Isaiah.

The many testimonials to the pleasure and profit with which his second volume had been read, led the Author to think that he could not employ the evening of his life better than to go on with the work on which the smile of God had evidently rested: he, therefore, took the Book of the prophet Jeremiah, and the present volume is the result of his studies on some of the most interesting portions of that Book.

That God may be pleased to bless these morning and evening walks to the spiritual health and vigour of many souls, is the Author's sincere desire and earnest prayer.

Ramsgate, 1872.

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J E R E M I A H.

DIVINE FORE-KNOWLEDGE.

JER. i. 5: “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee ; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.”

WITH man a life must be lived before it can be known and written. Not so with God. Before a life has existence it is known as fully as if its entire history had been written and placed before His eyes. “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee.” This is not an exceptional case. What God here said to Jeremiah He might say to every man born into the world—to every despot who has trodden under foot the rights of a people—to every persecutor and murderer who has imbrued his hands in the blood of the saints—to every patriot who has bled for his country—to every philanthropist who has laboured for the welfare of the poor and the needy, the fallen and the outcasts—and to every missionary and minister who has preached the unsearchable riches of Christ.

To all and each of these God might say—“Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee.” I know

thee, O despot, and the despotism of thy rule and reign. I knew thee, O persecutor and murderer, and the innocent blood thou wouldst shed. And thou, O patriot, I knew thee, and thy burning love for thy country. And thou, O philanthropist, I knew thee and thy zeal in the cause of suffering humanity. And thou, O missionary of the Cross and preacher of My gospel, I knew thee and all thy labours in seeking the welfare of souls. The infinite mind of God is a library, and in that library is the biography of every man before he comes into the world.

But while the life of every man is known by God before his birth, every man is not sanctified by God and ordained beforehand to the work he performs. God ordains no despots to be despots, no persecutors to be persecutors of His Church and people; no sinner to sin. To say that God ordains man to do evil is blasphemy, it is to make God the author of evil, and the approver of sin—for what is ordination, but appointment? and what is appointment, but approval? for who would ordain and appoint that which he did not and could not approve? Away then with an idea so repugnant to reason, and so dishonouring to God! Crucify it! Crucify it; for it is not fit that such a thought should live, either in the mind of an angel, or in the brain of a man.

While, therefore, God may say to every man—“Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee,” it is only to the Jeremiahs He says—“Before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.” God sanctifies and ordains prophets, apostles, evangelists,

teachers, and other servants of His whom He sends into the vineyard to work, but He sets apart no man, and ordains no man to do evil. When a man does evil, he does it of himself; "he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed;" "then when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin, and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death." "Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above," and is the result of divine ordination; but every thing that is not good, every thing that is vile, and bad, cometh not from above, but from beneath, from the low depths of human depravity, or the lower depths of Satanic agency.

Divine ordinations extend not only to prophets and apostles, and other officials in the Church of God, but to every vessel of mercy, to all who are saved by grace. Under the preaching of the apostles, we are told that "as many as were ordained to eternal life believed," thus teaching us, that the salvation of the soul is as much the result of divine ordination, as was the appointment of Jeremiah to the prophetic office, or the call of Paul to the office of apostleship. The ordinations of God to whatever they relate must all be before the birth of man, and before the creation of the universe, owing to the immutability of His nature, and the eternity of His counsel.

As He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," and as with Him there is no variableness nor shadow of turning, He can make no appointments at one time which He did not make at another. Had He ordained Jeremiah a prophet *after* his birth, and

not *before*, where had been His immutability—the eternity of His counsel, designs, or plans? In that case there had been variableness, and something more than the *shadow* of turning. But as with God there is no variableness, nor the shadow of turning, it follows that all His ordinations, appointments, or decrees—whether they relate to the offices which men are to fill, or to the gifts and grace which He bestows upon the children of men—must be eternal, for any after-thought, or any subsequent appointment, would imply mutability, variableness, change.

But here it may be asked, Has not God changed? Did He not forego His purpose to overthrow Nineveh? Did He not in answer to prayer add fifteen years to the life of Hezekiah? And does He not promise to be enquired of by the house of Israel? To which we reply, that these very facts go to prove the very thing which they are thought to disprove—namely, God's unchangeableness. Unchangeable in His pity for penitents, He spared penitent Nineveh. Immutable in His love for His people, He listens in love to their prayers, and answers their requests. Indeed all the acts of God's judgments and mercy, when properly examined, will be found to arise from the immutability of His nature, in other words, from the changelessness of His moral attributes or perfections. He cannot deny Himself, nor act contrary to His nature. Reason therefore, as well as revelation, both concur in testifying that divine appointments are eternal, and the divine conduct the result of the immutability of His nature.

Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? By the law of divine appointment. If the prophet would boast, God would remind him that before he was born He ordained him a prophet. And if the saint would boast, Paul would remind him that the grace which made him a saint was given him in Christ Jesus before the world began, and the prophet and the saint must each confess—"By the grace of God I am what I am." The prophet is a prophet by the grace of divine ordination, and the saint is a saint by the same grace, followed by the grace of redemption through Christ, and sanctification by the Holy Spirit. And as to grace the one owes his elevation to office, and the other his salvation from the wrath to come, both humbly bow before the mercy-seat and gratefully say—"Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be glory."

LIVING WATERS.

JER. ii. 13 : "The fountain of living waters."

SUCH is God. This is His own description of Himself. He is not only the fountain of light, but of life. All the great rivers of life which are running through this world of ours, and ten thousand worlds besides, take their rise in and flow from Him, as the great fountain. Life is of different kinds and of varied duration. The lowest is vegetable life, and this life covers as with a carpet our fields, mantles our mountains, decks our orchards, and adorns our gardens. Then there is animal life, and this abounds through air, earth, and sea. Life in almost endless variety is to be seen in the air we breathe, the earth we tread, and the sea which washes every shore. Then there is mental life, the heritage of man and of all intelligences throughout the universe who can understand law or duty, and, as a consequence, are held responsible for their deeds. This is a noble life, and its possession makes its possessor a noble creature, placing him far above the mere animal, and makes him lord of the animal creation.

But there is a nobler, a higher life than even this : it is what we may designate the spiritual life, the life of God in the soul of man, and the essence of which is a godlike happiness or bliss. By virtue

of this life we become one with God ; we dwell in Him, and He in us ; we enter into His joy ; we drink of the river of His pleasure.

Now all this life has one common source, God is the fountain of it all—of all that life which in the time of spring and summer covers like a lake the whole face of nature—of all that life which breathes, moves, and has its being in air, earth and sea—of all that life which has reason and intellect, and which can obey or disobey the commands of God, and of all that life which delights itself in all that is holy and true. From God, as from an overflowing fountain, this fourfold kind of life has been flowing for near six thousand years, and flows still. The streams are as constant and copious as when they first flowed ; indeed they are more so, for they are widening, deepening, and extending themselves every century. We say nothing about vegetable life, but never was there so much of animal life, mental life, and spiritual life as now. The streams have wonderfully widened, deepened, and spread, since first they issued from the great eternal and exhaustless fountain. What will be their further increase and extension before they are all dried up by the fire which is to wrap the world in flame we know not, nor is it important we should know. The fact if revealed would not add one jot or tittle to our happiness.

God, then, is the fountain of life and light. All the oceans of light, and all the great rivers of life, emanate and flow from Him. He is also the fountain of blessings which in their flow secure the life, the happiness, the bliss of those who drink thereof.

When God calls Himself "the fountain of living waters," we understand Him to mean that He is the source from whence all those blessings flow which when received give real bliss to the soul, and that, too, in everlasting perpetuity.

This fountain of living waters became incarnate and dwelt among us, and when He met with the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well He gave her to understand that He had this water to give to those who asked it at His hands. He said to her, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." That is to say, dropping the figure, He would have given thee those spiritual blessings which as a sinner you need, and which would have secured for you a life of holy joy and sacred bliss.

Had this fountain of living waters been sealed, had its waters never flown, death, spiritual death, had reigned from Adam to Moses, and from Moses down to the end of time, nor would that have been the end of its reign: through eternity it had swayed its sceptre over the lost race, and in *Hades* had ruled them as with a rod of iron. Had this fountain never been opened, had no living waters flowed from God, there had been no faith, no hope, no love, no joy, no peace, none of those great spiritual blessings which go to make existence a *life*—a *pleasure*—a *blissful reality*, and this poor world of ours had been as a barren heath, or as an arid desert without a particle of life on its surface, and eternity would have been a waste howling wilderness, whose silence would

only have been broken by the howl of misery and the wail of sorrow.

Never then let us forget that all the real happiness which we possess in this world, and all the life-inspiring hopes which we cherish with regard to the world to come, flow from that fountain of living waters which Christ opened by His death, and whose streams have run through this our poor death-stricken world, giving life and sustaining life wherever they flow. Around this blessed fountain the saints in every age have gathered, and have drank to their heart's content, but owing to seductive influences some have been drawn away from the fountain to the cistern. Instead of delighting in God and in the ordinances of His appointment, they have delighted themselves in things seen and temporal. Instead of a life of faith, they have lived a life of sense. Instead of fellowship with God, there has been fellowship with the world, and thus they have forsaken the fountain of living waters for cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water; for what are all earthly pleasures and sensual delights but broken cisterns, whose water will all run out, and leave the poor soul with its thirst unsatisfied, unslaked.

Oh, the folly of such conduct! The Lord Himself, amazed at such folly, calls upon the heavens to share in His astonishment, and cries—"Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this . . . For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters"—and as if that one evil were, not enough—they have "hewed them out

cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water." They have thus dishonoured Me and forsaken their own mercies, they have preferred the cistern to the fountain—in other words, they have preferred the creature to the Creator, a life of sense to a life of faith, things temporal to things eternal.

Now against two such fearful evils as these it behoves us earnestly to pray and diligently to watch, that so we may constantly abide by the fountain, drink of its life-giving waters, drink and thirst no more. What our Lord said to the woman of Samaria He says to every child of man—"Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life." Let then those who may be endeavouring to slake their thirst from some broken cistern of carnal delight or sensual gratification, go to the Lord Jesus, and in the words of the woman of Samaria, pray—"Lord, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw."

"O ye that pant for living streams
And pine away and die,"

Come to the Fountain. Lo, Jesus calleth you, and says, "If any man thirst let him come unto ME and drink."

TROUBLES SELF-PROCURED.

JER. ii. 17 : "Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God?"

THERE are troubles, afflictions, and sorrows, which are self-procured, and there are troubles, afflictions, and sorrows which are not self-procured, but which are divine appointments, the result of divine sovereignty. It is very important to distinguish between those which are self-procured and those which are not, in order that in the one case we may acknowledge our transgressions and confess our sins, and in the other that we may calmly and meekly bow the head, and say, "The will of the Lord be done."

The afflictions and sufferings which are not self-procured are those which come upon men without any will or act of their own. Such for example as the affliction of the man that was born blind, or the suffering of the man who was lame from his mother's womb. Had the question been put to each or either of these men—"Hast thou not procured this unto thyself?" the answer had been an emphatic No. The lame man had said, My lameness is the result of no act of mine own; and the blind man had said, My blindness is the result of no conduct of mine own—"Neither hath this man sinned nor his parents." The cause of this blindness was the

sovereign will of God, to the end that the glory of Christ might be displayed in the restoration of the man to perfect sight. These two cases are only samples of a multitude of other cases, in which afflictions are not self-procured, but are the result of Divine Sovereignty, intended to answer some ulterior end or purpose of God in His government of the world and in His management of human affairs.

But suppose we were to put this question to the prisoner in his cell, or to the exile in his captivity, or to the libertine filled with a loathsome disease, or to the prodigal who had spent his substance in riotous living. If to each of these we were to say, "Hast thou not procured this unto thyself?" the answer would be—"I have, I have. I have no one to blame but myself. I have broken righteous laws and am now suffering the penalty thereof. I have ruined myself. I have been my own destroyer. To me belongs the shame, the guilt, and to me only, in that I willingly and wilfully forsook the Lord and followed the devices of my own evil heart. 'O, wretched man that I am!' Wretched in the recollection that my degradation and misery are self-procured."

How different the state of mind—how calm, how tranquil, and serene the mind, when the troubles and sorrows of the present life are not self-procured, but are traceable only to the sovereign pleasure of Him who does not afflict willingly, but who works all things after the counsel of His own will, and makes all things "work together for good to them that love Him and are the called according to His purpose."

When the good man who has lost his all can look upon the clean sweep which has been made of every thing valuable and dear to him, as made by the providence of God, and not by his own improvidence, he calmly and adoringly says, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." When a pious woman is bereft of her husband, she bows her head like a weeping willow, and sheds her tears as rain; but presently she is heard to say, in accents sweet and soft, "Thy will, O Lord, thy will be done." When affliction suddenly overtakes a man of God, you may hear him in the depths of his sufferings say, "I know that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me;" he recognises the hand divine, and the fact that it is the Lord who has afflicted him tends greatly to soothe his mind and calm his spirit. The man whose affliction has been procured by his own sinfulness or folly has for his aching head a pillow of thorns, while the man whose affliction is traceable only to the will of God has for his head a pillow soft as down. We know of no greater comfort in the time of heavy losses, sad bereavements, or personal affliction, than the conviction that "It is the Lord," knowing as we do that when He afflicts, it is not for His pleasure, but for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness.

See, then, the vast difference there is between troubles which are self-procured and those which are the ordinations of an all-wise and gracious Providence, and while you mark the difference we would not have you fail to perceive how it is that men bring

trouble upon themselves; namely, by forsaking the Lord. Forsaking Him, they forsake the fountain of bliss, the fountain of hope and of mercy. Forsaking Him, one runs into infidelity, another into iniquity, a third into crime. These are the "paths of the destroyer"—Satan's broad highways, which lead to final ruin—the perdition of ungodly men. Could we see the wretched inmates of the prison of "outer darkness," in all their misery and woe, and were we to put to each and all of them the question—"Hast thou not procured this unto thyself?" the answer would be—"We have, we have. We are now reaping the reward of our iniquity—the wages of our sin, which is death."

Seeing, then, the consequences, the fearful consequences of forsaking the Lord, let us go unto the altar of God, and there vow everlasting allegiance to Him whose right it is to reign *over* us and *in* us. And when in the secrecy of our closet we have made this solemn vow, let us see to it that we forsake not the Lord our God. Better forsake everything that is dear and valuable of an earthly kind than be guilty of the sin of forsaking the Lord. From the lips of the Lord Jesus we learn that we had better forsake houses and lands, kindred and friends, than Him. I know of no passage of Holy Writ more encouraging in its promise on the one hand, and more solemn in its declaration on the other, than that which addresses itself to every child of man, and says, "If thou seek him he will be found of thee, but if thou forsake him he will cast thee off for ever." Seek then, O ye thoughtless sons of

men, "Seek the Lord while he may be found." Seek Him with your whole heart. Seek Him then, seek Him, or a time will come when He, seated on the judgment seat, will say to you, "Depart, ye cursed," and thus cast you off for ever. "Behold, *now* is the accepted time; *now* is the day of salvation."

SALVATION.

JER. iii. 23: "Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel."

IF man is a sinner he needs salvation. If he is not a sinner he needs no salvation. Angels need no salvation, for they have kept their first estate, and have never sinned. If man had kept his first estate, and had never sinned, he, like the angels, had needed no salvation. In that case man had been under no curse of law, no condemnation, and could have needed no redemption or salvation therefrom.

Now the testimony of Scripture is, that "All have sinned." And this testimony is confirmed by the conscience of every man; for conscience—unless seared as with a hot iron—must plead guilty before God as a transgressor of His law. As then all have sinned, all need salvation, and the question is—Where is salvation to be looked for, or hoped for? The prophet says—"In vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains." Lofty hills and cloud-capped mountains cannot save man from the penalty of a broken law. Paul says—"In vain is salvation hoped for from the deeds of the law," for "by the deeds of the law no flesh living can be justified." The same writer says,

In vain is salvation hoped for from works of righteousness, for " 'Tis not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

To these testimonies of Scripture we may add those of all evangelical writers and preachers, and declare, in vain is salvation hoped for from *baptism*, *confirmation*, the *eucharist*, or from *any* or *all* of the external rites of religion, whether derived from Scripture, or handed down by tradition. What is there in the nature of rites or a ritualistic religion adapted to save the soul? Nothing, absolutely nothing. Judaism was ritualistic, and it never saved a soul; its entire system was only "a shadow of good things to come." And it was faith in the good things to come, or rather it was faith in Christ and His atoning sacrifice, which saved, and not the rites, which only shadowed forth His vicarious sufferings and death.

Where, then, is salvation to be looked for, and hoped for? Look not to me, says the highest hill, and the loftiest mountain echoes back the sound. Look not to me, says Sinai's law, for salvation is not in me, I have only condemnation for the sinner. Look not to us, say works of righteousness, for we are only as a garment of rags. Look not to us, say Jewish rites and Christian ordinances, for we are only shadows, and shadows cannot save you. But, "Look unto me," says Christ, "and be ye saved, for I am God, and besides me there is no Saviour." "Truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of

Israel." That is to say—not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles, Israel being a term which comprises all believers of whom Abraham is said to be the father, pattern, or model, for "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." Abraham was justified by faith, and in every age, and in every clime, the *one* and *only* method of justification has been that of faith.

"The glorious Gospel of the blessed God" is distinguished for its *units*, its *ones*. For the guilty soul it has but *one* Saviour, for its justification it has but *one* faith, for its sanctification but *one* Spirit, for its obedience but *one* Lord, for its ultimate abode but *one* home, for its service but *one* song. These units in the Gospel of Salvation make it unique, they distinguish it from every other system of religion, and give it adaptation to all classes and conditions of men, so that no man, hearing the Gospel can be said to be without hope in the world.

Now suppose salvation could only be hoped for by an intelligent investigation of the Sacred Records, then there could be no hope for the ignorant and uneducated. Suppose it could only be hoped for by those who attend on the public means of grace, then there could be no hope for the aged, the infirm, the afflicted, whose attendance on sanctuary services is an utter impossibility. Suppose it could only be hoped for by the baptized, and the recipients of the Lord's Supper, then there could be no hope for dying malefactors, drowning men, and expiring sufferers who had neglected these ordinances of divine appointment; but now that salvation is to be looked

for in Christ there is hope for all,—the aged and infirm, the afflicted, the unbaptized and non-recipients of the Lord's Supper, for all can look to Christ, and looking can be saved. See the dying Israelites in the wilderness with the venom of the serpent rankling in their veins. Suppose their salvation from the fatal consequences of the deadly bite could only have been hoped for from some surgical operation, or from some healing medicine, what hope could there have been for one half of the poor sufferers who had been smitten down? But now that the means of cure was a look, there was hope for all, and as many as looked were saved, and the testimony of Scripture is, that as many as look to Christ shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life.

This doctrine of salvation by faith in Christ has ever been, and is still, a stumblingblock to the Jew, and foolishness to the Greek. To the Jew it is a stumblingblock, because it makes void his circumcision, and the whole of his Jewish ritualism. To the Greek or philosopher it is foolishness, because in it he cannot see the relation of cause and effect. Now when the philosopher regards the doctrine of the cross as foolishness, because that in it he cannot see the relation there is between faith in Christ and the salvation of the soul, he forgets that there may be relations too subtle for his philosophic eye to discover, besides which, he ought not to ignore facts, however unable he may be to trace those facts up to some natural law or philosophic cause.

Now assuming that the Bible is a divine revela-

tion, and therefore true, it is a *fact* that the dying Israelite was saved by a look. Why then, we ask, may not a dying sinner be saved in the same way? If the philosopher should say, I cannot see the relation between faith in Christ and the justification of the sinner, we say to him, Can you see the relation between a look at a serpent of brass and the recovery from the serpent's bite? If you cannot, then why do you regard the doctrine of justification by faith as foolishness *because* you cannot see the relation of cause and effect? We do think that the wilderness fact ought in all fairness to silence all objections to the gospel theory of justification by faith, for as all must admit, on the testimony of Scripture, that a look saved the body when dying from a dangerous wound, so upon the same testimony all ought to admit that faith saves the soul from the wages of sin, which is death.

But whether men admit the power of the cross to save, or reject it as foolishness, the cross must still be uplifted. To it the sinner must still be directed to look, for while ages have rolled away since the prophet wrote and testified of Christ, it is still true that, "In vain is salvation hoped for from the hills and from the multitude of mountains;" and that, "Truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel." Revelation affirms—"There is no other name given under heaven or among men whereby we can be saved." As there are no two Gods, so there are no two Saviours. "There is *one* God and *one* Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." And we have it upon the authority of this

Mediator Himself, "No man cometh unto the Father
but my Me."

"The gate is open wide :
The new and living way
Is clear and free and bright,
With love and peace and day.
Into the holiest now we come,
Our present and our endless home."

PAINED AT HEART.

JER. iv. 19: "I am pained at my very heart."

THIS world is a beautiful world; especially does it appear so in the three seasons of spring, summer, and autumn. In the spring nature puts on her beautiful emerald attire, and looks lovely. In the summer her fields are waving with corn, and her pastures are covered over with flocks. In the autumn her trees and her vines are laden with fruit, pleasant to the eye, and sweet to the taste. And yet in this beautiful world sorrow abounds. Sighs are heaved, tears are shed, groans are uttered, and many a weeping one is saying, "I am pained, I am pained at my very heart."

"God is love." "His tender mercies are over all His works." "He is gracious and full of compassion." "He is rich in mercy." "He openeth His hand and supplieth the returning wants of every living thing." "Unto us are given exceeding great and precious promises," promises which guarantee to us all that we need for body and for soul, for time and for eternity, and yet though we have such a God on whom to rely, and such promises in which to confide, the lamentation from many a quarter is heard, "I am pained, I am pained at my very heart."

The man of God is a highly privileged man, he is a prince and a priest; he belongs to a royal priesthood, and ministers before the King Eternal within

the Holy of Holies. His wealth is great, he has "durable riches," "all things are his," and there is a sense in which, as he gazes on the heavens above and on the earth beneath, he can say, "I am monarch of all I survey;" and yet prince and priest as he is, monarch as he is of all he surveys, there are times and seasons when he is heard to say, "I am pained, I am pained at my very heart."

Now, how comes it to pass that in a world so beautiful, with a God so gracious, and with privileges and blessings so great, there should be so often poured forth this doleful lamentation? We reply: one cause of this heart-pain is to be found in those dire calamities with which it has pleased God to visit a nation or a people. When a country is suffering from the ravages of war, or the spread of the pestilence, or the effects of a famine, the man of God, as he gazes upon the misery which abounds, heaves the sigh of grief, and feeling himself unable to relieve the suffering he is compelled to witness, exclaims, "I am pained at my very heart." Pained to see sorrow which I cannot assuage, and suffering which I cannot relieve. So when a calamity comes upon a family; when a wife is bereft of her husband, or when a mother is bereaved of her children; crushed in spirit beneath the stroke, the bereaved one retires into some secret place to weep there, and there the briny tears, as they gush forth, tell the sad fact, "I am pained, I am pained at my very heart."

But dire calamities are not the only things that pain the heart. Depravity gives the same pain. I mean depravity as seen in a child, or witnessed in

a professor of religion, or developed in one's own conduct. When a pious parent sees his child in a state of awful alienation from God, averse to all that is godly and divine, preferring the shadows of time to the realities of eternity, madly pursuing a course the end of which must be death, he sighs, he mourns over his poor prodigal, and in bitter anguish of spirit he cries, "I am pained, I am pained at my very heart." "O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for thee, my son, my son!"

The pious pastor has seen the professor of religion, a member of his own Church, turn aside into forbidden paths; he has seen him stumble and fall: he has heard the taunting inquiry of the sceptical world, "What are ye more than others?" and the chuckle of some son of Belial, "Aha! Aha! so would we have it." And while he has looked on this sad scene of moral delinquency, and reflected on the pernicious effects of such a departure from God and truth; his sorrow has been stirred within him, and he too has said, "I am pained, I am pained at my very heart." "O tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon! lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph."

These developments of depravity which so pain the heart of the parent, and the pastor, are not the only instances to be found in the world. Experience tells us of our own personal sinfulness, which again and again has occasioned us much sorrow of heart. Like Moses we have sometimes spoken unadvisedly with our lips; or like Peter, we have not only been ashamed

to own our Lord, but by some sad act have positively denied Him ; and when we have so sinned, our grief has been great, our sorrow has been deep. We have wept bitterly, and our confession has been, " I am pained, I am pained at my very heart." " O wretched man that I am ! " that I should have denied Him to whom I had sworn allegiance, and declared my readiness to go with Him to prison or to death. O blessed Redeemer, forgive me this wrong !

Now amid the many things which arise to pain the heart in this poor fallen world of ours, we are led to ask—And is there a world in which, if reached, there shall be no more pain ? There is. There is. The Gospel declares it, and tells of a rest which remains for the people of God. Christ reveals it, and points to the Father's house of many mansions. Poets write of it as the paradise of bliss, where " pleasures banish pain." And the whole Church of the living God sings of it. Yes—

" We sing of the realms of the blessed,
That country so fine and so fair ;
And oft are its beauties confessed,
But what must it be to be there ? "

We know not ; at least we know but in part ; but this much we do know, that to be there will be to be *with* Jesus, and to be *like* Him. Like Him in all the loveliness of His perfected humanity. Like Him in all the aspirations and sympathies of His moral nature. Like Him in the fulness of His joy and the perpetuity of His bliss. Yes, there is a sense in which the glorified believer can say, " I and my Saviour are one."

FORFEITED MERCIES.

JER. v, 25; "Your sins have withholden good things from you."

A FATHER in his conduct towards his children withholds many a good thing from the undutiful and disobedient, and bestows many a favour on the dutiful and loving. "God dealeth with us as with children." Addressing His naughty and disobedient ones, who were mourning the absence of blessings they once enjoyed, He tells them the cause thereof, and says, "Your sins have withholden good things from you." It is not that I am unkind. It is not that I have lost all interest in your welfare, and care naught about you. The cause is not in *Me*, but in *you*. It is your sins which have provoked Me to anger, and your multiplied transgressions have led Me to withhold the mercies you once enjoyed.

Here, then, we learn that the Divine conduct is regulated by the human, that as men act in relation to Him and to one another, so He acts towards them. The Psalmist recognised this great and oft-forgotten truth when, in appealing to God, he said, "With the merciful Thou wilt show Thyself merciful. With an upright man Thou wilt show Thyself upright. With the pure Thou wilt shew thyself pure. And with the froward Thou wilt show Thyself froward."

This is simple equity, and this equity principle in God's dealings with men our Lord Himself distinctly taught, saying to the people, "With what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again."

This principle of equity is not departed from, even when God does *not* deal with us after our sins, nor reward us according to our iniquities. It is maintained in all its integrity in the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God—in the fact that "He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities." God, instead of dealing with *us* after our sins, dealt with *Christ*, and meted out to *Him* the punishment due to *us*. We believe there is no solitary instance in the whole universe of God in which sin has gone unpunished, and iniquity unrewarded—that is to say, there is no case in which equity has been ignored for the purpose of showing mercy. Every transgression and disobedience receives a just recompense of reward, either in the person of the transgressor, or in the person of the Lord Jesus, the atoning, the propitiatory Sacrifice.

The great object of Christ's mission to our world was to redeem us from the curse of the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons; and because we who believe are sons, God's treatment of us is paternal, and not legal. When we sin He does not punish us as the law directs, but chastens us as His fatherly wisdom and lovingkindness dictate. "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten." "If my children keep not my law, and walk not in my statutes, I will visit their transgressions with a rod, and their iniquities with stripes, nevertheless my

lovingkindness will I not take from them." It is the *rod* He uses and not the *sword*, and that because we are not under the law, but under grace. The sword the magistrate uses, "for he beareth not the sword in vain." The rod the father employs, and this he does for correctional and disciplinary purposes.

As, then, the conduct of God towards His children is disciplinary, it is no matter of surprise that He should withhold good things from the rebellious and disobedient, which in the paternal kindness of His heart He would otherwise have bestowed. To smile upon rebellion, to bless with favours the disobedient, is a moral impossibility. To do this would be to encourage the rebellious spirit, and to give a premium to disobedience. God, from the very holiness of His nature, and the love of His heart, must always mark with His displeasure the disobedience of His children; and this He does by withholding from some the light of His countenance and the joys of His salvation, and from others the success and prosperity with which they were once blessed. "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him;" but when a man's ways please *not* the Lord, He allows his adversaries to prevail, and withholds good things as a mark of His sore displeasure.

By sin, and not by sovereignty, the greatest blessings have been forfeited, and the choicest favours have been lost. Heaven was forfeited through sin. Eden was lost through sin; and nearly all the losses which have come upon the world and the Church may be

traced, directly or indirectly, to sin, as the great procuring cause. So kind, so gracious is God, that "He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." As a loving Father, He mourns over the rebellion of His children, and regrets the loss of blessings which ensue. In all the kindness and tenderness of His loving heart, He says to them—"Oh that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments, then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea!"

Let us then seek to be profoundly impressed with the evil of sin. Of all the evils which abound, sin is the greatest—it is the great parent cause of all others. Sin is a mighty evil, whether viewed in relation to the godly or the ungodly. In relation to the latter, it shuts them out of heaven, and shuts them up in perdition. In relation to the godly, it destroys their peace, stains their purity, mars their happiness, and deprives them of many a blessing which their Heavenly Father would willingly have bestowed. This gigantic evil, we rejoice to know, has received its death warrant, and will one day cease to exist, so far as the godly are concerned. The death of the body will be the death of sin. The spirit leaving it will be perfected, and will go to join the spirits of the just made perfect. There is no sin in heaven, therefore no blessing can be forfeited there. With robes washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb, heaven's inhabitants are faultless and without blame. Perfect in purity, God looks upon them with ineffable complacency, and withholds from them nothing that can minister to their enjoyment, or cau

add to their bliss. Glorious destiny this? May it be mine! Reader, may it be yours! How different the destiny of the ungodly! Banished the presence of God, and the glory of His power, every earthly blessing they once enjoyed will be for ever withheld. From Dives there goes up the cry, "Send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue;" but even that was withheld. How awful the destiny! May it never be mine! Reader, may it never be yours!

THE FALSE CRY OF PEACE.

JER. vi. 14: "They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace."

To practise deception in commercial life is a sin to be punished by the civil power. To tell a poor patient he is better, and will recover from his sickness, when his medical man knows that his sickness is unto death, and that nothing can save him, is deception, cruel as the grave. But to tell a poor sinner who has never been born again of the Spirit, and has never with the heart believed in Christ, that he is safe for heaven, is a baser and more fatal deception than any practised in commercial life or in medical circles. This deception is, we fear, by no means confined to the Church of Rome. Judging from the theology of many of the ministers of our Protestant Christianity, and from their pulpit ministrations, we can come to no other conclusion than that the cry is very general, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace." There is no peace between God and the sinner so long as the enmity of his mind is unsubdued; no peace so long as the unbelief of the heart remains. Before there can be peace *with* God the soul must come *to* God, confess its guilt, and ask for forgiveness; and then that its guilt may be cancelled,

and its sins forgiven, there must be faith in the Lord Jesus. It is only as the soul is justified by faith that there is peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now is it not a fact—a sad and melancholy fact—that multitudes are addressed every Sabbath day from many pulpits of our country whose minds are at enmity against God, and who have never with the heart believed unto righteousness; but who, nevertheless, are told that they are safe for eternity if they have but conformed to the rites of the Church, and are upright and moral in life? What, we ask, is this but another gospel, which the Apostle denounced with all the weight of his authority, and upon the preachers of which he pronounced an anathema? “If any man,” he says, “preach any other gospel than that ye have received, let him be accursed.” To preach any other gospel than the Apostles preached, is to delude the soul, and to utter the fatal cry, “Peace, peace, when there is no peace.”

The Apostle once said, “Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel.” But a heavier curse had fallen upon him if he had preached another gospel than that which he received from the Lord Jesus. Had he preached no gospel at all, he had, in that case, simply been unfaithful to his Lord; but if he had preached another gospel, he had then been both unfaithful to his Lord, and a deceiver of his fellow-men. He is the faithful captain who, keeping a good look-out, and seeing danger before him, cries, with a stentorian voice, “*Breakers ahead! Port*

your helm!" And he is the faithful and true witness, who, seeing the danger to which sinners are exposed, lifts up his voice like a trumpet, and cries, "*Wrath ahead!*" "Turn ye, turn ye." "Flee from the wrath to come," and hasten to the refuge set before you in the Gospel. O, for more of such faithful and true witnesses, who would rather die a martyr's death than cry "Peace, peace, when there is no peace." Better be dumb, everlastingly dumb, than cry peace and safety to those who are out of Christ, and are yet in their sins; for while this cry of peace is ringing in their ears, "their judgment lingereth not," and "their damnation slumbereth not."

Now, while there are multitudes to whom it would be a mockery, a delusion, and a snare to cry "peace, peace," there are, blessed be God, many to whom we may honestly make this gospel proclamation. To all true penitents—to all genuine believers—to all real lovers of God and of Christ, we cry, "*peace, peace.*" We tell them they have nothing to fear. They have nothing to fear from the law, for they are not under law, but under grace. They have nothing to fear from death, for, in their case, "to die is gain." They have nothing to fear from the judgment-seat of Christ, for "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again." Thus their safety is certain. The citadel in which they are lodged is one whose "walls are salvation, and whose gates are praise." Walls which no enemy can scale, and gates which no foe can break through. "The name

of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous run into it and are safe." And because they are safe, we say to them "*peace, peace.*" "Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."

"More happy, but not more secure,
The glorified spirits in heaven."

PRAYER FOR A PEOPLE FORBIDDEN.

JER. vii. 16: "Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear thee."

WHAT a monster evil is sin! It shuts the very ears of God, and seals the lips of the man of God. "Pray not thou for this people, for I will not hear thee." Mine ears are closed to all appeals made in their behalf, therefore pray not for them; they have so deeply incurred mine anger that I will not be asked to do anything for them. Thus we see there is a limit to the Divine forbearance and goodness. Here they had reached their limits. Forbearance could go no further: goodness could follow no longer; and when a people is placed, or rather, when sinners place themselves beyond the limits of the Divine forbearance and goodness, prayer becomes useless—God will not hear.

Beyond these limits the Antedelvians placed themselves, so that when the deluge came, "They cried, but there was none to save; even unto the Lord, but he answered them not." Sodom and Gomorrah were placed in the same hopeless condition: God would listen to no appeals on behalf of the doomed cities. Israel also in the wilderness, passing the limits of the Divine forbearance and goodness, which extended to a period of forty long

years, were left to perish in the wilderness, God swearing in His wrath, "They shall not enter into my rest." And all whose ultimate destiny will be perdition, will utter this one wail: "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." God's long-suffering is over, and His mercy is clean gone for ever.

But it may be asked, If ordinary men cannot prevail with God on behalf of hardened transgressors, may not extraordinary men, men of eminent piety, inspired men, men holding the high prophetic office—may not these prevail? To this question God Himself replies, and says: "Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be towards this people." Where, in the ages in which they lived, was there a greater man than Moses, or a more pious man than Samuel? And yet these great and good men might stand before the Lord and plead for transgressors, and not prevail. And here we learn that, in some cases, the total alienation of men from God, so alienates God from men, that notwithstanding the most earnest pleadings of the most earnest men, God says: "My mind could not be towards this people." So complete was the alienation of Ephraim from God, and God from Ephraim, that He said: "Ephraim is joined unto idols; let him alone." And in this, God seemed to say, Let Me alone also, plead no more with Me on his behalf; an idolater he is, an idolater let him be.

Now while there are limits to the Divine forbearance and goodness, we cannot tell what those limits are. The boundary line of Divine goodness or grace

Revelation has not drawn, except in one instance. This boundary line does not embrace within its vast range a sin called the sin against the Holy Ghost. That sin, whatever it may be, lies beyond the line—the limit—of God's mercy. It is declared to be an unpardonable sin, never to be forgiven, either in this world, or in that which is to come. It is said that, "all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men," with this solitary exception. But then, while all other manner of sin and blasphemy are pardonable, it does not follow that all manner of sin and blasphemy are pardoned. Sins and blasphemies may be of so aggravated a character, and of such extended duration, as to exceed the limits of the Divine forbearance, as in the case before us, and as in the case of Israel in the wilderness. Still, we cannot tell what those limits are. We know not the number of crimes, or the number of years, to which the Divine forbearance extends; but we do know, from the conversion of such a man as Saul, and the salvation of such a man as the crucified malefactor, that the long-suffering of God is great, and the mercy of God vast and extensive, or they could never have embraced a persecutor like Saul, and a robber like the crucified thief. Paul speaks of himself as an example of the Lord's long-suffering, and as a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting. This pattern is a specimen of the exceeding riches of Divine grace and mercy, to the end that no sinner believing on the Lord Jesus might despair of life everlasting.

Seeing, then, on the one hand, that "the goodness,

and forbearance, and long-suffering of God " are very great ; and on the other hand, that they have limits which may be overleaped and passed, we say to every hardened transgressor, in the words of Paul, " Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee—or rather ought to lead thee—to repentance ? " Despised them thou hast ; but if thou continuest to do so, a time is coming when thou wilt have them no longer to despise, " but after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." O sinner ! trusting thou hast not yet passed the limits of the Divine forbearance, we pray you, we beseech you, " Seek the Lord while He may be found : call ye upon Him while He is near." And be encouraged to do so by the fact that, " He is rich in mercy unto all who call upon him." *All*, whether Jew or Gentile, high or low, rich or poor—*all*, though their sins be of the deepest dye. He can make the scarlet as wool, and the crimson white as snow. " The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." Go, then, to Him, O sinner ; go without delay, and say—

" It is Thy blood alone, alone Thy blood
That cleanseth me ;

And for that blood of Thine—that cleansing blood,
I come to Thee."

MEN VOID OF WISDOM.

JER. viii. 9: "Lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord ;
and what wisdom is in them ?"

ATHEISTS, Deists, Papists, Ritualists, and Rationalists—falsely so called—have rejected the word of the Lord, and what wisdom is in them ? Read their writings ; examine their doctrines ; look at their dogmas, and see if you can discover one particle of wisdom in all that they hold and teach. "Professing themselves to be wise, they become fools." To say nothing of the Atheist, who is beneath notice, seeing that he most irrationally denies the existence of God, without whom he himself could never have had existence : to say nothing of this insane man—what wisdom is there in the Deist, who denies the Divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, when without such inspiration prophecy and its fulfilment had been an utter impossibility, for what finite mind could have looked through the vista of forthcoming ages, and predicted with all the accuracy of the historian the events that would happen to empires, dynasties, tribes, and people ? What wisdom is there in the Papist, who looks to a creature to be saved, and to a relic to be blessed, who believes that bread becomes, at the word of a priest, *flesh*, and wine becomes, by the same word, *blood* ? What wisdom is there in the Ritualist,

who imagines that "God, who is a spirit, and who seeketh such to worship him as worship him in spirit and in truth," can be pleased with lighted candles, smoking incense, and the colour and cut of a garment? What wisdom is there in the Rationalist, who denies the fact of miracles, and declares their impossibility, when the very *first* man was a miracle, and the *first* of every living creature too, for the first man, not being born of woman, and the first of every creature, not being born of its species, must have come into existence contrary to the present established order of nature. And a miracle, according to common consent, is a departure from the present established order or law of nature.

Let Rationalists deny the miracles of the Bible as they may: we challenge them to deny the miracles of creation. Creation, from the tiniest insect up to the mightiest orb that revolves in the heavens, is one stupendous miracle, being the product of no law that now governs the world, but of a Power higher than all law, of *the* Power that made all the laws which now regulate and govern this vast universe of matter and of mind. When, therefore, we think of the men whose creed and dogmas are so repugnant to the dictates of an enlightened understanding, we are constrained to take up the words of the prophet, and to say: "Lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord, and what wisdom is in them?"

Where then is wisdom to be found? Where? Not in the men who reject the word of the Lord,

however profound their learning or deep their researches ; but in those who accept it, who listen to its teachings, and who make it the rule of their faith and practice. These, these are wise. With them is wisdom. Theirs is the wisdom of God, and says a great authority, "The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men." Those who reject the word of the Lord reject the light, and walk on in darkness ; they give up infallibility for fallibility ; they prefer tradition to revelation. O, the folly ! Well might the prophet ask, What wisdom is in them ? If they were wise they would prefer God's own beautiful light and lamp to their own dark lantern ; infallible truth to their own fallible theories, Divine revelation to human tradition.

The wisdom of those who accept the word of the Lord, who are guided by its authority, and influenced by its truth, is to be seen in many things. You may see it in the peace and security which they enjoy. Resting on Divine testimony, they are not like the troubled sea which cannot rest, but calm as the glassy lake without a ripple on its surface. You may see it in the efforts they put forth for the welfare of their fellow-men. Acting under Divine directions, they go forth with the simple story of the cross, and they win souls from error to truth, from sin to holiness, from the world to Christ. "He that winneth souls is *wise*." You may see it in their meetness to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Following the word of the Lord, they are made meet for the presence of the Lord.

The truth moulds them into His image, and they are thereby prepared to join the ranks of the spirits of the just made perfect. And is there no wisdom in all this? We speak as unto wise men, judge ye what we say.

Let us then hold fast to the Bible. To it let us come, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place. To it let us repair, as to the very fountain of truth, and from it let us derive—and that exclusively of all other books—doctrines for our creed, rites for our observance, and precepts for our daily walk and conversation. Let us prize it as a pearl of great price, and value it as a treasure of incomparable worth. By faith in its eternal verities let us make it our own, and clasping it to our hearts, say :—

“ Holy Bible, book divine,
Precious treasure, thou art mine ! ”

Without it no man is happy, no man is wise. They who have never seen it, and they who have seen it and rejected it, are in gross darkness. On subjects of highest moment to themselves they have no light. As we think of the despisers of Divine revelation, and the fatal consequences of so terrible a mistake, it is more in pity and compassion than in derision and taunt we ask, What wisdom is in them? The light that is in them is darkness. “ And if the light that is in them be darkness, how great is that darkness ! ” It is *dense* darkness :—

“ Dense as midnight, ere the sun
Hath his morning race begun.”

WORMWOOD AND GALL.

JER. ix. 15 : "Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink."

DISOBEDIENCE to the Divine Will was the cause of this threatened punishment. Thus saith the Lord : "Because they have forsaken my law, and have not obeyed my voice, but have walked after the imagination of their own heart, and after Baalim; Behold I will feed them with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink." But for disobedience, wormwood had never grown on earthly soil, and gall had never been an ingredient in man's cup. Of the one, man had never eaten, and of the other, man had never drunk. Wormwood was never angels' food, nor gall angels' drink, before they fell. Nor was it the meat and drink of Adam in paradise until, in evil hour, he plucked the fatal fruit, and disobeyed the voice of the Lord God. Thus all the bitterness of which angels or men ever tasted is the result of disobedience, transgression, and sin. Where there is no disobedience, there is no wormwood; where there is no sin, there is no gall.

God, from the essential holiness of His nature, cannot do otherwise than mark with His displeasure every act of disobedience. Disobedience is rebellion—rebellion against His most righteous autho-

rity, and rebellion cannot go unpunished. Obedience is loyalty and love—loyalty to the throne of God, and love to God Himself, and loyalty and love never go unrewarded. Hence God feeds the disobedient with wormwood and gall, and the obedient with honey and the honeycomb. Bitter, fearfully bitter, is the diet of transgressors. Sweet, delightfully sweet, is the meat and the drink of God's dutiful and obedient children. "He withholds no good thing from them that walk uprightly."

Now, rewards and punishments present a twofold motive to obedience, and yet such is the innate depravity of man, that, notwithstanding this double motive to obedience, iniquity extensively prevails. Regardless of the threatened punishment on the one hand, and of promised reward on the other, multitudes hearken not to the voice of the Lord, but walk after the imaginations of their own heart. The law of rewards and punishment becomes weak through the flesh. The flesh, with all the force of a pent-up river, breaks through its banks, and rushes forth, spreading mischief and misery in its flow. Such is the mighty power of the flesh, *alias* depravity, that, notwithstanding the threat of perdition, and the promise of heaven, man continues on in his course of transgression and sin, just as though perdition had not been threatened, and heaven had not been promised. Human depravity is stronger than Divine law. Divine law, as all history shows, has not been able, and is not now able, to keep down the depravity of man, and to prevent its outbursts in acts of wilful disobedience.

Paul, even after his conversion, felt the power of the flesh to be strong, and almost irresistible. In his case he tells us it overcame his *will*, and led him to do that which he would not, and kept him back from doing that which he would. The flesh was Paul's constant enemy, his perpetual foe; it beset him continually, it harassed and distressed him. Under its power he groans in spirit, as one fastened to a dead body, and cries, "Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Time rolled on, and he was delivered. The cord that bound his pure spirit to the flesh was cut and sundered, and he rose into the glorious liberty of the children of God in heaven. In heaven the law is no longer weak, nor is the will to do good feeble. Both are strong, strong to secure the obedience which God requires, and which the will is anxious to render. With angels the law is not weak, and with the spirits of the just made perfect the will is not feeble. In both cases their obedience is perfect, and with perfect obedience rendered to the Most High God, they will never be threatened with wormwood for their meat and gall for their drink.

The spirits of the just, being made like unto the angels, man in heaven eats angels' food, and both are happy, supremely happy. Their meat and their drink is to do the will of God. This is their food—food sweet as nectar, food on which the Saviour lived during His earthly sojourn, and which will be the never-failing aliment of every ransomed immortal spirit. The good man, ere he departs this

life to be with Jesus, and to join the ranks of the glorified, feels that though the earth should utterly fail in yielding her annual supplies, he shall not want. In the prospect of the world becoming like unto an arid desert, he sings, with melody in his heart, unto the Lord :—

“ I cannot famish, though this earth should fail,
Though life through all its fields should pine and die,
Though the sweet verdure should forsake each vale,
And every stream of every land run dry.”

“ I cannot famish.” “ The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup.” “ My God will supply all my need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus ;” and through eternity will feed me, not with wormwood and gall, but with the finest of the wheat—the best of all the blessings He has in His boundless resources to bestow. Eternity, bitter as wormwood and gall, will be the portion of the wicked. Eternity, sweet as honey and the honeycomb, will be the heritage of the righteous. O for a righteous life, and a righteous death ! Better never to have lived at all, than to live an unrighteous life, and to die a godless death. Non-entity must assuredly be better than entity, if that entity, or existence, have only wormwood for its food and gall for its drink. What our Lord so solemnly said of Judas, may, with equal truthfulness, be said of every man living in iniquity, and dying in his sins : “ It had been good for that man if he had not been born.” It requires no great stretch of imagination to suppose that every lost

soul in perdition is uttering one of the lamentations of the prophet, and saying, "Cursed be the day wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, there is a man child conceived." Birth can never be an occasion for rejoicing, unless death issue in everlasting life. Let this be the glorious issue of death, and instead of cursing the day of our birth, we shall bless the day, and glorify God for bringing us into existence, the duration of which is eternal, and the bliss of which will never be embittered with the wormwood and the gall.

GRIEF THAT MUST BE BORNE.

JER. x. 19: "Truly this is a grief, and I must bear it."

THE occasions of grief are manifold. The spread of grief is universal. Where is the Goshen where no tears flow? In vain do we ask. Tears have gushed from almost every eye; and at the time we write, tears are flowing down many a cheek. This is a land of tears. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain." "And not only they, but ourselves also, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body." Grief being, more or less, the allotted portion of every man, how differently is it borne by different parties. Under it some are fretful, others are patient; some are rebellious, others submissive. Here is a father who has a prodigal son. The son was once the father's joy and hope; but he became thoughtless, and then reckless. At length he leaves his father's house and wanders in the paths of ungodliness, spending his money in riotous living, until he becomes penniless and reduced to want. Over this lost one the father heaves the deep-fetched sigh, and in sorrow cries: Oh, my son, my son! would to God thou hadst hearkened to my voice, and listened to my counsel! And now, on

bended knees, he prays for him, calmly bowing his head and saying, "Truly this is a grief, and I must bear it."

"Alas, I have not words to tell my grief,
To vent my sorrows would be some relief."

But Thou, Lord, knowest its unutterable depth. Thou knowest that

"Weep I cannot,
But my heart bleeds."

There is a mother who has lost her first-born. The flower has faded before her eyes. She weeps briny tears. Fain would she have kept that flower alive, growing by her side in beauty and fragrance every day and every year, but she could not. A worm was at the root, and despite her every effort to save it, it died. Friends sympathise with her and letters of condolence reach her; but she is a daughter of Abraham, a woman of faith, and with this grace in vigorous exercise, we hear her calmly and submissively saying, "Truly this is a grief, and I must bear it."

"Upon her face there was the tint of grief;"

But in her soul there was the well-spring of hope, under the influence of which she could utter consoling words to her wounded spirit and say,

"He is not lost, but gone before."

We go to a house where a good man is suffering from a wounded body or from broken bones. We try and speak to him some few words of comfort and consolation; he listens to us, and is thankful; and then in great pain he sighs out the words of

the prophet, and says, "Woe is me, for my hurt, my wound is grievous;" but, after a slight pause, he yields his spirit, as it were, to the dispensation, and says, "Truly this is a grief, and I must bear it." It might have been worse; "I will bear the chastisement of the Lord, because I have sinned against him." "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"

But a good man is not called to bear his griefs alone, and without help from above. In the furnace in which there were three cast, there was a fourth seen, like the Son of God; and that fourth was there, quenching the violence of the flame, and not suffering a hair of their head to be singed. That selfsame fourth is always present in every furnace into which a good man is thrown; and though He is not always to be seen, yet in the midst of the fire His voice is to be heard, saying, "Fear not, I am with thee." The believer is never alone in the furnace. The Lord is always with him. "I see a fourth in the midst of the fire," cried the astonished Nebuchadnezzar; "I see a second," exclaims the delighted Christian, as he looks upon a suffering brother, calm and tranquil in the furnace of affliction and sorrow. Yes, faith can discern the Lord Jesus in the midst of the flame, and in consequence of His presence, the fire does no harm, its effects are only good, for, says the Great Refiner, I only design—

"Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine."

Griefs, then, in many cases are blessings. The

advantages resulting therefrom are great. They purify the soul, and work out for its realization, "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." In the season of grief we rain tears, and a shower of tears will often be as productive of good to the soul as is a shower of rain to the soil. Showers are not joyous or pleasant while they are falling, but afterwards they yield fruit. Even so afflictions are not joyous but grievous, but afterwards they yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness. Arid and desert is the land where no rain falls, and not less arid and desert is the soul where no tears drop.

Tears soften the soul even as rain the earth, and make it like unto good ground in which the good seed takes root, and springs up, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. We pity a man of sorrow and a woman of grief; but perhaps our pity would be better bestowed on the man of no sorrow and the woman of no grief. The men who are not in trouble as other men, neither plagued like other men, who are strangers to sorrow and unacquainted with grief, are described by an inspired penman as slaves, violent, corrupt, and wicked: "Pride compasseth them about as a chain, violence covereth them as a garment, they are corrupt and speak wickedly."

Let us then sympathise with every man of sorrow and every woman of grief, but let us reserve all our pity for those more miserable ones who wear the chain of pride, and are clothed with the garment of violence—the chain by which they are led captive by the devil at his will, and the garment by which

they are known as the children of the wicked one—that arch despot whose violence is that of a roaring lion, and whose subtlety is that of an old serpent.

Our pity is often misplaced. The most pitiable objects in the world are not the weepers, but those who never weep—men who never heave the sigh of regret for sin, nor shed the tear of lamentation for iniquity. Such men are dead, while they live—dead in trespasses and sins; a death this which leads on to a second death, a death which is the climax of misery and woe.

As we think of the subjects of this second death, we can fancy we hear them pouring forth their wail in an agony of despair, saying, “Truly this is a grief, and we must bear it.” And if the question be asked, How long? the answer from the Holy Oracle is, “*For ever and ever.*” To save from a destiny so terrible Christ died, and now from His throne in the heavens He cries in tenderest pity to the children of men, “Look unto me, and be ye saved,” for “As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked.” O listen to these gracious words! Hearken to this voice Divine! Let it not be said of you as of many who are now beyond the sound of mercy’s call—

“They closed the ear against Thy tender words;
They chose another lord, and spurned Thy sway;
Thou wouldst have drawn them, but they snapped Thy
cords;
Thou wouldst have blessed them, but they turned
away.”

DIVINE GUIDANCE.

JER. x. 23: "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."

MAN has a will, a power of choice—he can go where he please, and do what he please; and yet, with this will and power of choice, it is declared that "The way of man is not in himself, it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Now, we dare not say that this statement is of universal application—that it applies to all men; for to say this would be, in effect, to say, that God was the author of every foolish man's mistakes and every wicked man's wrong doings. Were we to make this declaration of the prophet universal in its application, the sinner who has chosen the way of iniquity might excuse himself by saying, "It was not in me to choose my way;" and the bold transgressor, who had run into all evil, might say, "It was not in me to direct my steps."

Against all such perversions of truth we must strenuously guard. We must never take such a view of the providential government of God as to make Infinite Wisdom the author of man's folly, and Immaculate Purity the author of man's iniquity. This were as irrational as it is profane. So far as the

godless sinner is concerned, the way of man *is* in himself—he directs his own steps. If the way of the sinner is not in himself, and if he does not direct his own steps, to whom must we ascribe the way which he takes, and the course which he pursues? The fact is, it is his own wicked and depraved nature which influences his life and directs his steps. “A deceitful heart has turned him aside” into forbidden paths and sinful courses, and the sole responsibility of his conduct rests upon himself.

As, then, the passage does not admit of universal application, to whom does it apply? Who is the man, and what his character, whose way is not in himself, and who does not direct his steps? The Psalmist has anticipated this question, and furnished the answer. Here it is: “The steps of a *good man* are ordered by the Lord, and he delighteth in his way.” This Divine guidance of a good man is the result of Divine grace and Divine providence. Divine grace leads him into the way of truth and holiness—“the King’s highway,” the way which leads to the New Jerusalem, the city of the living God. But for this grace, no man would be found walking therein, but all the downward way. The confession of every good man is—

“ *Grace taught my wandering feet
To tread the heavenly road.*”

And this confession harmonises with the declaration of the prophet, “O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself.” Experience, observation,

and testimony clearly show that when a man walks in the way of holiness, it is not of himself, but of the Lord, the result of His grace and mercy.

But while the way of holiness in which a man walks is not of himself, but is the result of Divine grace, so also his whole course through life is the result of Divine providence. Providence, which is only another term for the dealings of God with man, effects its objects and carries out its designs in ways silent as the growth of a flower, and as concealed from human gaze as the root beneath the soil. Providence directs the steps of good men, not by an audible voice, saying to them, "Arise, and go thither," or, "Do this, or do that," but by a secret and powerful influence on the mind, creating therein predilections, tastes, and impulses. One man has a predilection for the ministry; another for missionary work; a third for some professional career; a fourth, with less talent and education, has a taste for mechanical work, or commercial pursuits; a fifth has a strong, irrepressible desire for a maritime life, and to sea, to sea he will go, despite the wishes of parents and friends that he would choose another vocation.

In all this diversity of taste and choice we see Providence at work—the hand of the Lord directing the steps of His servants to their several spheres of labour and action. But for this diversity of taste and choice, we see not how the constantly vacated posts of labour—vacated by reason of death—could ever be filled up. It is by this all-wise arrangement of human affairs by Providence that society is kept together, and the multitudinous departments of

physical, mental, and moral labour are filled up. It is a remarkable fact, that at no time is there any standstill in any department of labour and work for want of labourers and workmen. Whatever work is required to be done, whether to pull down or to build up, to plough the ocean or to till the land, to construct railroads or to lay down submarine telegraphic cables, to work in deep mines or to sit in high places of State, to explore unknown lands or to make known the unknown God, men are to be found ready to do it. In His infinite wisdom, God, by bestowing a diversity of gifts, and creating diversity of tastes, fills up in every age of the world's history all the niches in the great framework of civilization and society. Of every man in every department of labour it may be said, in the words of the prophet, "His God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him." Seest thou a man skilled in any of the common handicrafts of life? "This also," cries the prophet, "cometh from the Lord of Hosts, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working."

But in addition to this general law of providence, by which men are fitted and disposed to occupy their various posts of labour, it must not be overlooked that the Lord has frequently directed the steps of His servants by certain divine impulses. Many are the cases in which a good man, moved by a hand unseen, has taken a certain course, by which some very important end has been secured, or some appalling catastrophe has been avoided. And when asked *why* he took the course which led to the

advancement of his best interests, or to the saving of his life, the only answer he could give was this, "I was strongly moved and influenced to take the step I did."

This Divine and secret influence on the human mind and heart who can doubt? Sceptics may laugh at it as they please, and may brand its belief as fanaticism; but if it be a fact that God influenced the heart of a fish to take into custody a runaway prophet, and if it be a truth that He moved the birds of the air to take food to a faithful prophet, why should it be thought a thing incredible that God should influence and move the hearts and minds of men, and thus direct their steps? Paul was no sceptic in secret Divine influences; he distinctly recognised and gratefully acknowledged the fact. Did he see a fellow-labourer taking a special interest in the welfare of a people in common with himself? he confesses the cause Divine, and says, "*Thanks be to God who put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you.*" Superficial observers would see nothing in this care one for another but the natural consequence of human pity and compassion, and would offer their thanks to Titus. Paul, with a penetration much deeper, saw the hand Divine, and gave to God the praise.

Seeing then that men are influenced by the grace of God to walk in His way; seeing also that they are moved by the tastes and talents He has given them to choose the positions they occupy in the Church and the world; moreover, seeing that by certain Divine impulses they are led to certain

courses of action, which turn out to be eminently advantageous to themselves, and beneficial to others; we cannot but unite with the prophet in saying: "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself, it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Blessed, thrice blessed are they whose steps are ordered by the Lord! Under His guidance they shall be brought safely through the wilderness, they shall cross without danger the Jordan, and shall go in to possess the land—the land of light and beauty and everlasting fertility. O that man would but place himself under this Divine guidance! and looking up to the Great Ruler of the universe, say: "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel and afterwards receive me to glory."

OBEDIENCE.

JER. xi. 7 : "Obey my voice."

IN this one short sentence is couched the whole duty of man. By man we mean every man, man of every clime, of every grade, of every position and relationship. Man's duty does not fall short of this, and does not go beyond this. The question, What is my duty? by whomsoever put, receives but one answer, and that answer comes from the throne of God, "Obey my voice." God is king of kings, Lord of lords, Master of masters, Father of fathers, the sinner's Sovereign, and the saint's Saviour. He is Supreme, "Head over all God blessed for evermore." Hence the duty of all is to obey HIS VOICE, and to obey His voice is to discharge life's duty, whatever that duty may be. Is it asked, And where is His voice to be heard? We reply, In the Holy Oracle. There He speaks to man as man, and in the two tables of the law points out what is due to Himself as God, and what is due to one another. There He speaks to sinners who have broken the law, and points out to them what must be done in order to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. There He speaks to saints who have been redeemed from the law, and tells them all that is required of them in the varied relations of life which they

sustain. There He speaks to backsliders who have erred and strayed from His paths like lost sheep, and says: "Return, O backsliding Israel, and I will heal your backslidings." If, therefore, any man should ask, What is my duty? God replies, "Obey my voice," "Do my will," "Keep my commandments." This is the whole duty of man.

This call to obedience is almost universally disregarded. Even the most eminent saint is conscious at times of disobeying the voice of God. "In many things we all offend." Where is the saint who offends in no one point? Where is the Christian who omits no kind of duty? The frank confession of the whole Church is this: "We have not yet attained, neither are we already perfect." Were we perfect, we should obey His voice, whether it sounded from Sinai or Calvary, from the Throne of Justice or from the Throne of Grace. Had we the nature of angels, like them we should "do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word." We should be ministers of His, always doing His pleasure. But we are human, compassed with infirmities, and beset by depravity; hence while the spirit is willing always to obey His voice, the flesh is unwilling, and often opposes and thwarts the desire of the spirit, "When I would do good, evil is present with me;" "The things that I would I do not." But while in some respects the voice of God is universally disregarded, in many respects it is cheerfully and lovingly obeyed. The testimony of Christ is the testimony of all true disciples, "I delight to do thy will, O God; yea, thy law is within

my heart." Does the voice of God call to prayer? Prayer is made. Does He call to praise? Praise is offered. Does He call to public worship? See:—

" With a cheerful zeal
They haste to Zion's hill,
And there their vows and homage pay."

Does He call for nonconformity to the world? They come out of the world, and are separate. Does He call to some special service? They no sooner hear His voice than they obey and go. They are no longer the children of disobedience, but of obedience. They hearken to His voice, they become servants of righteousness, "they have their fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."

Besides this supreme voice, subordinate voices are heard calling to obedience, and not unfrequently do these subordinate voices utter distinct and opposite commands to the supreme voice. In all such cases, where human commands are opposed to the Divine, it is obviously the duty of all good men to be deaf to the human and obedient to the Divine. God, as supreme, demands that attention should be given to *His* will in preference to the will of men. The call from the throne eternal is imperative—"Obey *my* voice." And the reasonableness of this demand who can doubt? It commends itself to every man's *conscience*, however opposed to every man's *heart*. The Apostles felt it in all its force, and when arraigned for their loyalty to their Divine Lord, they put it to the consciences of their accusers, and said, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye."

This appeal was irresistible. Conscience testifies to every man that, in the event of two opposite voices or commands, the human and the Divine, the Divine must be obeyed, and not the human, and that, too, at whatever cost. The martyrs of every age knew the cost of obedience to their Divine Lord, and hesitated not to pay it. They deemed not their lives dear to themselves. When it became a question of disobedience to God, or death, these heroic men said, We can *die*, but we cannot *disobey*. We can give up our life, but we cannot give up our fidelity. We can lose our blood, even to the last drop, but we must and will hold fast our integrity. "Obey my voice" was a command which, coming from the Captain of their salvation, thrilled their hearts and filled them with valour. Sooner than disregard authority so great, so supreme, they were prepared to go to prison and to death. Here, then, we have something stronger than love of life. Love of life, we know, is strong. It is said, "All that a man hath will he give for his life." But to this rule there is an exception; and this exception is a faithful man's fidelity to his God. This he will not give for his life; he loves it with a stronger love, and holds it with a firmer grasp than life itself. Of this the blood of martyrs is both illustration and proof.

Now this Divine call to obedience which the martyrs so promptly obeyed, is both a call of justice and of grace. There is justice in the call, and there is grace too. It is but just that we should obey the voice supreme, while the reward of obedience,

the benefits which flow therefrom, show that the call is a call of grace. God, in calling us to obedience, consults His own glory and our profit; and when the voice Divine is obeyed, God is glorified and we are benefited. "In keeping his commandments there is great reward." The greatness of that reward who can estimate? The reward of obedience is extensive in its range. It comprises a self-approving conscience—the esteem of good men—the approbation of God—the "right to the tree of life"—the kingdom eternally prepared—and the crown that never fades. What, then, it may be asked, are we saved by works of righteousness which we have done? Nay—

"Not what these hands have done
Can save this guilty soul;
Not what this toiling flesh has borne
Can make my spirit whole.

" 'Tis He who loveth me,
And freely pardon gives;
I love, because He loveth me,
I live, because He lives."

Yes, "We love him because he first loved us." Love leads to obedience, and obedience realizes the great recompense of reward—a reward the value of which is unspeakable, and the duration of which is eternal.

DEALINGS OF GOD MYSTERIOUS.

JER. xii. 1: "Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee: yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments. Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?"

THE dispensations of God sometimes excite our astonishment and fill us with surprise. They are so different from what we should have expected. Knowing, as we do, that "He loveth righteousness and hateth wickedness," we should have thought prosperity had always been the lot of the righteous, and adversity the portion of the wicked. This was obviously the idea the prophet had formed in his own mind; hence, when he saw the reverse of this order of things—when he saw the prosperity of the wicked—he stood amazed and confounded, and enquired, "Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?" He could not see and did not understand the *why* and the *wherefore*. The *why* and the *wherefore* of God's dealings are oftentimes secrets, locked up in the cabinet of His infinite mind, and not revealed to the children of men. There are hundreds of things the reasons of which we do not know. The only answer we can find to many a perplexing question is this: "Even so, Father, for

so it seemeth good in thy sight." With this answer we must be content. We must wait for a fuller developement of His plans and purposes; and when developed in all their beauty and grandeur, all that was good in His sight will be good in our sight. We shall then have no need to talk with Him of His judgments, and of His dealings with the children of men. We shall then see clearly the wisdom of all His doings, and gratefully acknowledge before His throne, "Thou hast done all things well."

With regard to the prosperity of the wicked, be it remembered, it is of short duration: it is a fire of thorns which will soon burn itself out: it is a flower which will soon be cut down: it is a shadow which will soon pass away: it is a tree cursed and withering up from its roots. Be not then envious, O man of God, of the prosperity of the wicked. Thy portion, even in the depths of poverty, is infinitely better than his. The fire that warms thee, and throws a glow over thy soul, will never go out. The flower that grows and thrives in the garden of thy soul will never be cut down. Thy real pleasure is not a shadow which passes away, but a substance enduring for ever. Thy highest enjoyment is not a cursed, withered tree, but a tree of life which will flourish and bear fruit in any soil, in any clime, and will stand for ever. As we think of men of the world who have their portion in this life, pity rises in our breast. As we think of the men of God, congratulations kindle in our hearts. Considering their vast possessions—for all things are theirs—and their future prospects, which are replete with glory, we are constrained to

say, "Happy art thou, O Israel ; who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord ?" Better, infinitely better, be a good man in adversity than a wicked man in prosperity. The adversity of the good man shall *refine* him: "the prosperity of the wicked shall *slay* him."

But while the surprise of the prophet was excited by the prosperity of the wicked, he was no less amazed when he saw the happiness of the treacherous, and he enquires of the Lord, "Wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously ?" The happiness of the treacherous—if happiness it may be called—is the happiness of demons, who exult in the success of their wicked and nefarious designs. The treacherous are the children of that old traitor the devil. They partake his nature, do his works, and share the hellish glee he feels when his treachery has been successful in securing the fall of a Peter, the apostacy of a Judas, and the backsliding of many a child of God. But the happiness of the treacherous, being of the nature of Satanic delight, will terminate in sorrow. Revelation assures us there is a prison "prepared for the devil and his angels," and that after the judgment, the wicked—among whom are the treacherous—will be cast into it, there to be the prison companions of those for whom it was prepared. That the treacherous should meet the same fate, and be subject to the same doom as the great arch-traitor, seems to be only simple equity ; a principle this which guides our Courts of Judicature in their awards, and which we know will be the great principle of the Divine Court when God comes to judgment. Inspiration lifts up her voice and cries,

"With righteousness shall He judge the world, and the people with *equity*." And equity appears to us to require that God shall render to every man, and to every demon, according to his deeds, and that the same kind of deeds shall be followed by the same kind of punishment.

Seeing, then, the doom, the fearful doom, which awaits the great traitor and his treacherous children, let us not fretfully enquire "Wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?" The fact is, they are not happy. Happiness is too celestial a term to be applied to their malignant mirth and wicked delights. Happiness! Purity is essential to its nature. Happiness! "Duration is essential to the name." Happiness belongs not to the treacherous, but to the faithful, the guileless, "the pure in heart." Believers in Jesus are the only persons on God's earth who are truly happy. They, and they only, have in them the elements of bliss. They, and they only, have before them the prospect of bliss. Bliss is life—eternal life, and is the purchase and gift of Christ. Christ declares Himself the donor, and says, "I give unto my sheep eternal life;" a gift, the greatness of which baffles description, defies thought, and infinitely transcends its loftiest flight.

"Imagination's utmost stretch
In wonder dies away."

Eternal life! The life of an angel cannot exceed it. The life of God cannot surpass it. We are now a little lower than the angels, but we shall

rise to an equality with them, and shall have an existence coeval with His who brought us into existence. True, "it doth not yet appear what we shall be," but "immortality is brought to light by the Gospel," and it *doth appear* that immortality will be ours. Immortality! Who can grasp the thought?

"Immortal! Ages past, yet nothing gone.
Morn without eve. A race without a goal.
Unshortened by progression infinite.
Futurity for ever future! Life
Beginning still where computation ends."

Immortal! O, glorious truth! O, soul-inspiring fact!

"'Tis immortality, 'tis that alone,
Amid life's pains, abasements, emptiness,
The soul can comfort, elevate, and fill."

DEPRAVITY AND RESPONSIBILITY.

JER. xiii. 23: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil."

IF evil men, men accustomed to do evil, have no more power to change their habit of life than the Ethiopian his skin or the leopard his spots, wherein consists their responsibility? No one thinks of blaming the Ethiopian for the colour of his skin. No one dreams of despising the leopard because of his spots. Why, then, should evil men be blamed for not doing good, if the moral impossibility in their case is as great as that of a man changing the colour of his skin, or a beast removing his spots? To this we reply, that while there is some resemblance between the physical and the moral as here stated, there are also some very marked differences. The analogy is not perfect or complete; *e.g.*, the colour of the Ethiopian and the spots of the leopard are not of their own creation, while the *habit* of evil men to do evil is of their own formation. Men form their own habits. Of their own will they begin a life of evil. Of their own will they continue to do evil. At length they become "accustomed to do evil." The habit is fixed and formed

and becomes, if one may so speak, a part of their very nature.

Now to act contrary to a fixed habit, which has become incorporated into the moral nature of a man, is a difficulty almost as great as if the Ethiopian were to attempt to change his skin or the leopard to remove his spots. But mark the difference in the two cases. The Ethiopian could say, "I had nothing whatever to do with the colour of my skin, I did not make it the colour it is." And the leopard, if intelligent enough, might say, "I had nothing whatever to do with the spots of my skin, I did not make them; they are my Creator's marks, not mine." But can evil men speak thus? Can they say they had nothing whatever to do with the creation or formation of their evil habits? Can they plead they are only what God made them? To set up such a plea would be blasphemy. To speak thus would be to give the lie to conscience. Conscience tells them that, at the very outset of life, they *chose* the evil rather than the good; that they *loved* darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil; and that these evil deeds became at last almost as fixed and unalterable as the skin of the Ethiopian or the spots of the leopard. Herein is their responsibility—their habit of life is of their own formation. The good man says, and that most truly, "By the grace of God I am what I am." The wicked man must confess, if the truth he would speak, "By mine own acts and deeds I am what I am." The Ethiopian is an Ethiopian by the will of God. The leopard is a leopard by nature. Man

is a sinner *by his own will*, and a confirmed sinner *by his own conduct*. Responsibility follows. Accountability ensues. "So, then, every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

Responsibility being established by the united testimony of conscience and Scripture, the question arises—Can the depravity for which man is responsible be removed? and if so, by what power? That it can be removed is obvious, because it has been; and what has been done can be done. The power by which depravity has been removed is power *Divine*. Physically considered, *only* Divine power can change the skin of the Ethiopian, or remove the spots of the leopard. Morally considered, it is *only* power *Divine* that can so change the depraved heart of man, as that those who have been accustomed to do evil shall learn to do good. Prayer, preceding, accompanying, and following all evangelistic labour, is the recognition of this power, and the confession of its absolute necessity. Ministers and missionaries, and all faithful labourers in the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, desire nothing less than the soul's complete regeneration; so that old habits, fixed as the colour of the skin or the spots of the beast, may be taken away, and new and better habits formed. But to effect such a change—a change amounting almost to the miraculous—they feel they are not able, that it is altogether beyond their power and province; hence they bow before the mercy-seat, and in relation to this great work, confess before God, "Without *Thee* we can do nothing."

The co-operation of God with His servants in the great work of the soul's regeneration is a fact never to be lost sight of. Without this co-operation, what can man do for his fellow-men? What can the most eminent saint do for men sunken in depravity and confirmed in iniquity? He may teach them the rudiments of knowledge, he may instruct them in the arts and sciences, he may even make them acquainted with theology; but can he teach them, who are accustomed to do evil, to do good? Can he change their moral nature, and make them new creatures? Let him make the attempt, and without Divine co-operation, he might as well attempt to change the colour of the skin of the Ethiopian or remove the spots of the leopard. Let it then never be forgotten, that, "We are workers together with God;" and we may be assured if He work not with us, we labour in vain and spend our strength for nought. "Power belongeth unto God." "He can do whatsoever he pleaseth." He can do whatsoever He pleaseth without our co-operation. We can do nothing without His. His co-operation with us is a matter of *necessity*, if we would do any real good in the world. Our co-operation with Him is, with Him, a matter of *choice*. He could do without us, but He has chosen to make us workers together with Him. He has permitted us to enter into His joy, the joy which always flows from works of faith, especially when those works are crowned with success. When, then, we see that, through our feeble instrumentality, the skin of the Ethiopian is changed, and the spots of the leopard are removed, or—

dropping the figure—when we see moral nature changed, and those who were accustomed to do evil now zealously engaged in doing good, we rejoice and give thanks; and as we look upon the subjects of this great moral change, we share the honour and partake the felicity of Paul, when, addressing converts to the “truth as it is in Jesus,” he said, “*Ye are our glory and our joy.*”

FALSE PROPHETS.

JER. xiv. 14: "The prophets prophesy lies in my name."

LIES are dangerous things. They are false colours, false lights, false weights. False colours, by which the ship falls into the hands of pirates: false lights, by which the mariner is wrecked on the rocks, or stranded on the shore: false weights, by which the public are duped and robbed. Lies are Satanic in their origin; the father of them is the devil, and the penalty which they entail is death. Inspiration lifts up her voice, and declares that "All liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

Liars are of different species. The *genus* is one, the species are many. There is the trade liar, who declares that the thing he wants to sell is worth double what he asks for it, and the thing he wants to buy is not worth half its real value. Then there is the hypocritical liar, who assumes to be what he is not. One of this species pretends to be rich, when he has neither money nor property: he lives in a fine house, fares sumptuously every day, and apes the gentleman, and thus deceives and robs the public. Another pretends to be clever and talented, when in reality he is below mediocrity: he mounts the pulpit, preaches a first-class sermon; the

congregation admire, and pronounce him a great preacher; but they are deceived, for it turns out that the sermon was not his own, but another's. He next delivers a beautiful lecture; the audience applaud, and call him clever; but, alas! the lecture was borrowed, or rather, stolen from a celebrated author. This man shines with borrowed light, and the people take him to be a star, when in fact he is only a taper, and thus he deceives the public. A third puts on the garb of religion: he goes to the sanctuary, says prayers, takes the sacrament; the Word of God is on his lips, but the fear of God is not in his heart; the people think him religious, and he would have them think so, in order that he may gain their confidence, with a view to some selfish purpose, or some sordid design, and thus he deceives the very elect. Hypocritical liars are a numerous class; they are to be found in every section of society. Verbally, perhaps, they never lie, but practically they do; their whole life is a lie, and he who *acts* a lie is, in the sight of God, as great a sinner as he who *tells* a lie.

But there is another species of liar besides those we have already specified—we mean the prophetic. "The prophets prophesy lies in my name," saith the Lord. There have always been false prophets in every age, counterfeits of the true; they existed in the strictly prophetic period, and in the apostolic age. John says, "Many false prophets are gone out into the world;" whilst in every subsequent period down to the present, false preachers and teachers have been found prophesying lies in God's name,

and in God's house. Is it asked, And who are the prophets who prophesy lies in the name of the Lord? We reply, they are those who preach another Gospel than that which Paul preached. If Paul preached *the* true gospel of God, and men preach another gospel, they must preach a false one; and to preach a false gospel is to prophesy lies in the name of the Lord. We stay not here to specify these prophets; we care not to give them their denominational name and ecclesiastical distinction. Suffice to say, that whenever men are found preaching forgiveness of sins on any other ground than that of the Atonement, or proclaiming justification by the deeds of the law, or declaring regeneration by baptism, instead of by the Holy Ghost, or presenting salvation to the people in some other way than through faith in Christ, they prophesy lies in the name of the Lord—they prophesy “a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart.” All doctrinal error is a thing of nought; it has no real existence, it is a phantom of the brain, a spectre, a shadow—it is *ideality*, and not *reality*. Forgiveness on the ground of penance; justification by deeds of law; regeneration by baptism; transubstantiation, and other popish dogmas, are all things of nought; they are dreams, nonentities, the deceits of deceitful hearts.

The consequences of prophesying lies in the name of the Lord are fearful to contemplate. Thus prophesying, they give to the trumpet an uncertain sound; they cry “peace, peace” when the enemy is at the gate, and danger is imminent. Thus pro-

phesying, they mislead the blind. Instead of conducting them into the path of truth, the King's highway to heaven, they lead them into the path of error, one of Satan's highways to perdition. Thus prophesying, they incur a heavy, a tremendous responsibility. Souls perish under their false teachings; and thus perishing, God, in justice, declares, and says, "Their blood will I require at your hands:" a requirement this which will sink all false prophets into a deeper hell than that into which their victims fall. Consequences such as these should lead all preachers to the serious and searching inquiry: What am I preaching—truth or error? actual realities, or things of nought? If I am preaching truth, then under God I may save myself, and those who hear me; but if I am preaching error, then those who hear me may perish, and I may perish with them.

It is a fact deeply to be deplored that many have entered the ministry, and are occupying the pulpits of our country, who hold not "the truth as it is in Jesus," and are prophesying lies in the name of the Lord. This we take to be one of Satan's devices; and we know of none more extensively destructive of souls than this device of the great arch-foe. Errors are declared by an inspired writer to be "*damnable heresies*." A strong epithet this, but not too strong, knowing as we do that heresies in religion issue in the ultimate ruin of immortal souls.

Earnestly, then, let us pray that God would be pleased in His great mercy to rid the Churches of

our land, and of every other land, of all false prophets, that so the pulpits of our sanctuaries may be filled by heaven-taught and heaven-appointed men; men "called of God as was Aaron;" men who shall not shun to declare the whole counsel of God, and who, "by manifestation of the truth, shall commend themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." The day that shall witness this will be the brightest in the world's history—the sign and dawn of millennial glory.

Should it be asked, And will the time ever come when all that is false will give place to all that is true? we reply, We have no more doubt that such will be the case than that the darkness of the night will give place to the light of the morning. Truth is mightier than error. And not only so, it is obviously the purpose of God to destroy error from the face of the earth, and to flood the world with His truth. Prophecy points to a period when prophets shall no more prophesy lies in the name of the Lord—when truth shall universally prevail—when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea, and the whole earth shall be filled with His glory. "The Lord hasten it in His time."

PRAYER FOR A PEOPLE UNAVAILING.

JER. xv. 1 : "Though Moses and Samuel stood before me,
yet my mind could not be toward this people."

MOSES and Samuel were great and good men. By the grace of God they had been raised to posts of honour and responsibility. They were faithful men, and discharged the duties of their high office with fidelity. "Moses was faithful in all his house," and Samuel was no less faithful in all he did. With their piety as men, and their fidelity as servants, God was well pleased, and if any two men could have prevailed with God on behalf of a stiff-necked and rebellious people, it were these two. But the conduct of the people had so angered Him as to have alienated His mind from them, and so complete was the alienation, that He says : "Though Moses and Samuel stood before me"—my two most faithful and devoted servants—"yet my mind could not be toward this people." I have been favourable to them, but I can be favourable no more; "Cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth." Thus we see there is a limit to the Divine forbearance. He chides again and again, but "He will not always chide." He keeps back His anger, but He will not keep it back for ever. There is a period in the

iniquity of a people when God ceases to chide, and to keep back His anger, but enters into judgment, and cries, "Cast them out of my sight;" or swears in His wrath, "They shall not enter into my rest." And when God thus determines to visit iniquity, transgression, and sin, no prayers, not even from the best of men, and the most eminent of the servants of God, can arrest the judgment.

But while in a case like this the prayers of good men avail nothing, it is certain that in other cases they avail much. In answer to the prayers of good men, God has been favourable to our land, and blessed us with peace in our borders. In answer to prayer, the windows of heaven have been opened, and fertilising showers have been poured down. In answer to prayer, God has frustrated the designs of the wicked, and turned all their councils into foolishness. In answer to prayer, sickness has been arrested in its progress, and health has been restored. In answer to prayer, prison doors have been opened, and miraculous escapes have been effected. In answer to prayer, the Spirit has been poured down from on high, and the word of the Lord has had free course and been glorified. And what shall I more say? Time would fail me to tell of individual cases in which prayer has prevailed. Many a prayer has been offered for the sick, and the prayer of faith has saved the sick. Many a prayer has been offered for the poor, and by the poor, and my God has supplied all their need. Many a prayer has been offered for children by their parents, and, faithful to His promise, God has poured out His

Spirit on their seed, and His blessing on their offspring. Many a prayer has been offered for the renewal of strength in the inner man, and many are the cases in which a good man has testified, "In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul." Thus, as a general rule, the Moses' and the Samuels who stand before the Lord to plead with Him *do* prevail, their prayers *are* heard and answered. The case before us is exceptional. We know of no other case on record where prayer is declared to be of no avail. "He never said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye my face in vain." Had He said to Moses and Samuel, "Pray ye for this people," instead of "Thou shalt not pray for this people," they had then stood before the Lord and prevailed, His anger had been turned away, and His mind had been toward them. Let us then regard this exceptional case as proof of the general power of prayer, especially when offered by men of such eminent piety and fidelity as Moses and Samuel.

But while the power of prayer is obvious, there is no merit in prayer, nor in him who offers it. Merit is out of the question; the sinner who prays can merit nothing at the hands of God. Prayer supposes the absence of all claim; for what a man can claim he need not pray for. Prayer can only make its appeal to mercy, and mercy, being purely sovereign in its character, can listen to, or refuse the appeal, according to its good pleasure. Had mercy refused to listen to every appeal made by the sinner on his own behalf, or on behalf of a people, justice

had suffered no violation. Every answer to prayer is an act of pure mercy, and every act of mercy flows to us through righteousness by Jesus Christ, the channel, and the only channel of mercy from God to man. The declaration of God, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion," is one which shows the absence of all claim, and the right to withhold or bestow mercy, according to His sovereign will; and this right involves the right to hear, or not to hear, the prayers of suppliants, be those suppliants Moses' and Samuels, or publicans and sinners of deepest dye.

If God were under any obligation to hear prayer, and to bestow mercy, mercy would be no longer mercy, and grace would be no longer grace. Obligation is justice, and not mercy; duty, and not grace. Let us, then, in all our approaches to the mercy-seat, whether we go thither for ourselves, our families, the Church, or the world, remember that it is a *mercy-seat*, and that all our appeals for mercy and grace must be based on the atoning sacrifice; and even when thus based, must be left to the sovereignty of His will to answer, or not to answer. If impressed as we ought to be with the sovereignty of Divine mercy, and the sovereignty of grace in all its manifestations, our prayers would oftentimes be more humbly presented, and the answers thereto would kindle a loftier praise. Thus impressed, we should go to God "clothed with humility," and in every answer we received to our supplications we should exclaim, with a gratitude deep and sincere,

"Blessed be God, who hath not turned away my prayer, nor His mercy from me." He might have turned away both, but He turned away neither, for He delighteth in mercy, and in the prayer, too, offered for its bestowment.

Prayer is music in the ears of God. Music did we say? "Sweeter sounds than music knows" are the sounds of earnest prayer; they enter into the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth, and delight Him more than ten thousand harpers harping with their harps. The prayer of a penitent gives joy to all the hosts of heaven, and the prayers of saints, our Moses' and our Samuels, give pleasure to the Lord of Hosts, even when, for wise and judicial reasons, He cannot answer their prayers and grant them their requests. Yes, whether answered or unanswered, we know from the Holy Oracle that "*the prayer of the upright is His delight.*"

GOD'S WORD THE JOY OF THE GODLY.

JER. xv. 16 : "Thy words were found, and I did eat them ;
and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my
heart."

BREAD is sweet to the hungry, water is sweet to the thirsty, and the words of God are sweet to the child of God. Wherever they are found, whether in history, narrating the great events of time; or in prophecy, foretelling the glorious unfoldings of the future; or in law, pointing out the great duties of life; or in the Gospel, declaring the way of salvation by Jesus Christ; or in biography, in which the real character of good men is faithfully delineated, they are appreciated and enjoyed, they are the very aliment of the inner or spiritual life. Man, when quickened and made alive, does "not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

One of the children of God could say : "I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food." Another could say : "The law of Thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver;" "Sweeter, also, than honey and the honeycomb." And the prophet Jeremiah, who speaks of Divine truths under the figure of food, says : "Thy

words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart."

In the pages of sacred history we have a development of the principles of God's moral government. We learn that "righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne"—that "He loves righteousness, and hates iniquity;" that He is the friend of the oppressed, and the enemy of the oppressor; that His resources are boundless; that He can do whatsoever He pleaseth, despite the mighty obstacles that may stand in His way. Before Him, obstacles vanish, be they mighty as the Red Sea, or formidable as a waste, howling wilderness, in which to feed and keep alive for forty years more than half a million of men. With God, obstacles are only as straws on some great railroad, which cannot for a moment obstruct the progress of the train in its onward speed. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" What is there that He cannot do? He can suspend the laws of nature, and for them can substitute the supernatural. He can bring about supernatural results by reason of His own supernatural power; He can open rivers in the desert, and springs in high places; He can make the rock to pour forth water, and the clouds to rain down bread. Thus it is that Biblical history, in its development of the principles of the Divine government, becomes to a man of God deeply interesting and instructive, "the joy and rejoicing of his heart,"

Prophecy teaches us that with God the future is no sealed book—that He knows the future as well,

or even better than we know the past. We have *now* the history of the world, but He had it *before* the world was; we have the history of good men, but He had it before good men were born; we have the history of wicked men, but He had it before they came into the world to perform their wicked deeds. By reason of His omniscience, the history of nations and empires was written upon the vellum of His infinite mind, and was then transmitted to the minds of His servants the prophets. What is prophecy but forewritten history and biography? Hence, ages before Judas was born his biography was written, and placed among the records of inspiration; and centuries before Christ came into the world the principal features of His life and death, and the conduct of the Jews in their rejection of Him as the Messiah, were all portrayed, with all the correctness and fidelity of a faithful historian.

But while God knew, and in some cases wrote by means of prophets, the history of nations, and the biographies of individuals, His foreknowledge had no influence in forming the character and in shaping the lives of men. Had God no foreknowledge of Adam's fall, Abel's murder, Pharaoh's despotism, Absalom's conspiracy, Herod's infanticide, Judas' treachery, and the rejection of the Lord Jesus by the Jews, these men had been the same, and their deeds the same. God's foreknowledge of them and their wicked deeds had no more influence upon them than our foreknowledge of the rising and setting of the sun has upon that bright orb of day. But as we, foreknowing that the sun will rise at one

hour and set at another, make our foreknowledge subservient to our plans and purposes, so God made His foreknowledge subservient to the plans and purposes of His own infinite mind. The wrath of man and the wickedness of man He overruled and made tributary to the accomplishment of His holiest and grandest design of love and mercy: prophecy thus teaching us that the future is known to the Lord—the future of the Church, the world, and of every child of man; that He knows what to-morrow and every day will bring forth; and that nothing unforeseen by us can arise to thwart His plans, frustrate His designs, and defeat His purposes. Now we may rest assured that as He knows our time future and our eternal future, He has made ample provision for our every want and absolute necessity, as well as for our ultimate and everlasting well-being. Thus it is that prophecy, when rightly viewed, becomes a very fountain of delight, and the prophetic words of the Lord are to every good man “the joy and rejoicing of his heart.”

Leaving prophecy, we pass on to the consideration of the words of the Lord as embodied in law. By the lawless and disobedient the law is hated; by the righteous and obedient the law is loved. The language of the lawless is, O, how I *hate* thy law! The language of the righteous is, “O, how I *love* thy law!” The law of God prohibits nothing but what the enlightened conscience condemns, and commands nothing but what the same conscience approves. The law of God, when carried out in

its letter and spirit as in the life of Christ, makes a character truly lovely, "the perfection of beauty." For these reasons the words of the Lord, as we read them in the law of the Lord, are sweet to the soul, and are "the joy and rejoicing of the heart." Conformity to the law is an object of the soul's earnest desire and prayerful solicitude, and when love is perfected this desire will be realised, for "Love is the fulfilling of the law."

But if the words of the Lord in history, prophecy, and the law are sweet, sweeter still are His words as they sound forth in the Gospel of His Son. But they are only sweet to those who are in bitterness through manifold sins and multiplied transgressions. To others they have no charm, and are as unheeded as if they were a cunningly devised fable or an idle tale. Under deep conviction of sin, when the prayer goes up, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" or when the momentous question is asked, "What must I do to be saved?" no sound can be so welcome as the sound of the Gospel, which proclaims a pardon full and free, and a righteousness perfect and complete. As further light breaks in upon the darkened soul, all the great doctrines of the Gospel are seen in all their adaptation to the soul's moral and spiritual needs, and then it is that the soul, in grateful acknowledgment, speaks to the Lord, and says, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart."

Faith is a living upon the truths of the Gospel.

Faith makes both the truth, and Christ the substance of the truth, precious. "Unto you which believe He is precious." "Believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." "Full of glory!" What but faith in Christ and the verities of His Gospel can so lift the soul up to the third heavens as to fill it with glory? The pleasures of sense cannot do this. Sense may travel, but sense cannot fly. It may rove and range all the world around, but it cannot rise from its dust. It has no wings with which it can mount and rise "up where eternal ages roll." It is earthbound, and beyond the bounds of earth it cannot go. See, then, the superiority of faith over sense. If, as a great poet says—

"All on earth is shadow,
All beyond is substance,"

Sense lives upon shadows—faith upon substance. Sense feeds upon things seen and temporal, faith on things unseen and eternal. We do not undervalue sense and its pleasures—they are the gifts of God, but they are not worthy to be compared with faith. Faith soars into the celestial, lives upon the imperishable, and receives as its end the salvation of the soul. O the preciousness of faith! By it the truth is made precious, the joy and rejoicing of the heart. By it Christ is made precious, "the chief among ten thousand." By it heaven is reached, and the glories of the place unveiled. It is the substance of all we hope for—the earnest of a glorious future :—

"Faith, 'tis a precious gift."

Next to the gift of Christ to the world, is the gift of faith to the soul. Both are unspeakable. Words cannot express their true value, and while eternity will be for ever telling their worth, their real worth will be for ever untold. The benefits of faith are everlasting, but faith itself is a grace which belongs only to time. Soon we shall pass from time into eternity, where—

“ — Faith is sweetly lost in sight,
And hope in full supreme delight,
And everlasting love.”

THE GOOD MAN'S STRENGTH, FORTRESS, AND REFUGE.

JER. xvi. 19: "O Lord, my strength and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction."

"MY STRENGTH." How does the Divine become the strength of the human?—the Infinite the strength of the finite?—the Eternal the strength of the mortal?—God the strength of a man? We submit He does so by the confidence reposed in Him. Confidence in a leader is the very strength of those who follow. Wellington was the strength of his army by reason of the confidence the army had in him as a General. Nelson was the strength of his navy by reason of the confidence the navy had in him as an Admiral. Both the army and the navy had been weak, had they little or no confidence in their great leaders and commanders. In like manner the Lord is the strength of His people; they have confidence in Him, confidence in His wisdom, confidence in His power, confidence in His love; hence, through God they do valiantly, for He it is that treads down their enemies, and gives them the victory.

The valiant deeds effected by men of God, through the Lord being their strength, are of a most marvellous and wonderful kind. Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews gives us a long list of

the triumphs of faith. And what is faith, but confidence in God? And what are the triumphs of faith, but wonderful achievements effected through this confidence in God, so that God becomes the very strength of men? Men become "mighty through God" by reason of their unbounded and unshaken confidence in Him. Girded with strength Divine, they can each say, "I can do all things." Nothing seems too hard for them. O man of God! seeing that the Lord is thy strength by the confidence reposed in Him, "Hold fast, therefore, the beginning of thy confidence steadfast unto the end, which hath great recompense of reward."

But not only are mighty deeds effected through the Lord being the strength of His people—a wonderful calm is felt in the midst of storms. Solid as a rock, and firm as a mountain, the man strengthened with strength Divine looks upon the tempest and the storm in its wildest rage and fury, and calmly says, "Though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, I will not fear." "The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge." As we look upon this calmness of the man of God in the midst of earth's convulsions, and contrast it with the fear which agitates the breasts of the ungodly, we are reminded of one of the sayings of Solomon: "The wicked flee when no man pursueth; but the righteous are bold as a lion."

The man whose strength is the Lord, is able also to bear what would crush other men to the very

dust. He who holds the earth's huge pillars up "keeps the feet of his saints," and helps them to bear ponderous weights. He who gave to Samson a physical energy by which he could bear and carry away massive gates, gives to His servants a spiritual strength by which they are able to bear the weightiest troubles and the heaviest sufferings which can be placed on the shoulders of our poor humanity. Look at Paul, what a moral Samson he was. This man of God, for his fidelity to the truth, "received five times forty stripes save one; thrice was he beaten with rods, thrice he suffered shipwreck, a day and a night he was in the deep, once he was stoned and left for dead; in prisons frequent, in deaths oft." And then, in addition to all these sufferings, he suffered from hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness, besides the care and anxiety he daily felt for the welfare of all the churches; and yet, under all this accumulation of bodily suffering and mental anxiety, he was sustained. Indeed, the accumulated weight sat light upon the broad shoulders of his soul, so that instead of crying out, O the *weight*, the *weight* of my trials and sufferings! he calmly says, "these *light* afflictions which are but for a moment," &c. Light, because he was strong: he had more than a giant's strength, he had Divine strength. The Lord was his strength and his Redeemer.

But not only is the Lord the strength of His people, He is their "fortress, and their refuge in the day of affliction." The thought here suggested is that of Divine protection. This Divine fortress is impregnable. Against it Satan and his legions may

open their batteries, but "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it;" its walls cannot be breached or scaled. Lodged within this fortress, every soul is safe. But here we may be asked, Have not thousands of the Lord's people been slain? Has not the enemy come in upon them like a flood, and swallowed them up? What is the Book of Martyrs, but a record of the Lord's slain ones? How then can He be said to be an impregnable fortress, when the enemy has apparently stormed it, and committed such dreadful havoc? We reply: This Divine fortress is for the protection of *souls*, not of *bodies*. The Lord does not undertake—except in special cases—to protect the bodies of His people from violence or from violent deaths. From the first, in the death of Abel, He gave His people to understand that He did not undertake in all cases to preserve the *body*, but the *soul*. Had He undertaken this, He had never suffered Cain to have struck the murderous blow, nor would He have permitted the blood of His saints to be shed. For wise and inscrutable reasons He has left the body exposed to the persecutor's power, the assassin's knife, and the manifold catastrophes which befall the children of men; but He has never thus left the soul. For the preservation of the soul He has always been an impregnable fortress, and therefore it is that one sings—

"More happy, but not more secure,
The glorified spirits in heaven."

This exposure of the body to peril on the one hand, and the safety of the soul on the other, are

clearly indicated by our Lord's remark, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul." The body may be killed by wicked and ungodly men—it has no Divine fortress in which it can hide; but the soul no man can kill, lodged as it is in a fortification not made with hands, but in the Eternal God, who is Himself the fortress and the refuge of His people.

But there is another sense in which the Lord is the fortress and the refuge of His people in the day of affliction. In the day of affliction we hasten to Him as soldiers to a fortress when hotly pursued, or as vessels to a harbour of refuge when the wind blows a gale. And when before the mercy-seat, pouring out our hearts before Him, and pleading the promises, we feel as safe as the soldier behind his impregnable walls, and secure as the captain within his harbour of refuge. With this feeling pervading our breasts, we have calmly asked, Who is he that shall harm us, "O Lord, our strength, and our fortress, and our refuge in the day of affliction?" Again and again has the man of God, when tossed with tempest and not comforted, repaired to the mercy-seat, and found the Lord to be "a refuge from the storm and a covert from the tempest," and in the recollection of this, he sighs in spirit, and cries,—

"O may I ever find access
To breathe my sorrows there."

Well, O man of God, thou mayest, for said one who had often gone thither with his troubles—

"Thy mercy-seat is open still,
Here let my soul retreat."

Yes, blessed be God, it is open still to every poor burdened saint, and it is open still to every poor penitent sinner needing mercy; but when "the accepted time" is over, and "the day of salvation" is past, it will be open no longer, the door will then be closed, and over it will be written in letters bright as a flame of fire—"NO ADMITTANCE."

THE HEART: ITS DECEITFULNESS AND WICKEDNESS.

JER. xvii. 9: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."

THIS declaration of Holy Writ has been doubted and denied, but doubts and denials no more affect truth than do winds and storms the everlasting mountains. Truth may be both doubted and denied, but it cannot be destroyed—there it stands, solid as the rock in the midst of waves, firm as the mountain in the midst of storms. Some truths are difficult to illustrate and establish; they are profound, they lie deep below the surface, they are "the deep things of God." But the truth here affirmed belongs not to this class; it is easy of proof; it is a surface truth; it floats, if we may so speak, over the whole surface of society, and requires no penetrating genius to bring it up from the depths.

As illustrative of the heart's deceitfulness, we point in the first place to the mistakes into which it falls relative to religion. In some cases religion is utterly ignored, as if it were a matter of no concern whatever. Scripture declares it to be the one thing needful. The heart deems it to be not needful at all. In other cases religion is deemed to be a matter only of secondary importance; business, and the

affairs of this life, are thought to be of far greater moment than vital Christianity—things temporal are supposed to outweigh things eternal. Then the heart in its natural state, if it gives attention to religion at all, mistakes the forms of religion for the power, and takes the shadows of truth for the substance. "The heart is not deceitful," say some. How is it then, we ask, that it makes such glaring and fatal mistakes in the all-important matter of religion? If not deceitful, how comes it to pass that it so deceives?

The deceitfulness of the heart is further apparent in its pursuit of pleasure. The source of light is the sun; the source of pleasure is God. 'Tis true there are artificial lights, but these soon burn themselves out. So there are artificial pleasures, but these soon expire. The sun is a perpetual source of light; God is a perpetual source of bliss. The sun never ceases to shine over the whole kingdom of nature; it shines with the same luminousness at midnight as at midday, only upon another portion of our globe. God never ceases to be a source of bliss to the whole kingdom of grace. All heaven is blessed with the light of His countenance, and all the saints bask in the sunlight of His smile. But the heart, in its pursuit of pleasure, seeks it not from God, but from creatures and created objects. It supposes that pleasure is not to be found in God, and if found at all, it must be sought for in things seen and temporal. What, we ask, is this mistake, this great blunder of the heart, but an illustration and proof of its deceitfulness? If not deceitful, its

pursuit of pleasure would be in the *right*, and not in the *wrong* direction. Men, if their heart were true, would say: "We will go unto the altar of God—unto God, our exceeding joy;" but they do not go, and why? "A deceived heart has turned them aside."

The heart's deceitfulness is still further to be seen in the fact that God has not left it to be its own guide. A law has been given for its conduct, and a Gospel for its faith, while line upon line, and precept upon precept have been added to guide it in all the commonest, as well as in all the higher duties of life. Now, if the heart were not deceitful, and could safely be left to its own instincts and tendencies, what need could there be for Divine guidance? The ant wants no guide, overseer, or ruler; and why? Because the instinct of her nature is true, and never deceives her; and if the heart of man were as true as the instinct of the ant, the heart, like the ant, would want no guide in relation to its great duties and high responsibilities. The fact, therefore, that the heart needs Divine guidance in relation to all the duties of this life, and those which pertain to the life to come, together with the fact that it is not to be trusted, shows most clearly its deceitful character.

Is further proof needed? We have it in the declaration of our Lord that the heart must be renewed, and in the new covenant promise of a *new* heart to be given in due time to the house of Israel. The mariner, when on his voyage from one land to another country, never thinks of changing

his compass, or getting a new one, because he well knows that the compass is faithful and true, and will not deceive him. And if the heart of man were as faithful and true as the mariner's compass, we should never have heard from the lips of our Lord the declaration that the heart must be *changed*, nor should we have had the promise of God of a *new* heart to be given to the sons of men. A heart that is faithful and true need not be changed, or taken away, to be replaced by a new one.

The heart, then, *is* deceitful; this, we think, has been fairly established. But it is not the only deceitful thing in the world; other things are deceitful, though not equally so. "The heart is deceitful *above all things*;" it has no equal, it surpasses all other things in two particulars—in its extent and fatality. Other things may deceive only a *few* men, this deceives *every* man. Other things may so deceive as to ruin man's temporal interests, this so deceives as to peril man's eternal interests. Thus it is that man's subtlest and most dangerous foe is his own heart; and yet he regards it as no foe at all, but looks upon it rather as a friend to be trusted and followed, than as a foe to be dreaded and avoided; and in this estimate of his own heart, he illustrates and establishes that very deceitfulness which he is so disposed to deny.

The desperate wickedness of the human heart is also affirmed; and this is as easy of proof as is its unparalleled deceitfulness. Is it not a fact that the heart is at enmity against God, the highest, the holiest, and the best of beings? And is there no

desperate wickedness in that? Is it not a fact that the heart is utterly opposed to the law of God—a law which is holy, just, and good? Does not the heart impiously ignore its claims, and ruthlessly break both tables, trampling them in the dust? And is there no desperate wickedness in that? Is it not a fact that the heart sternly rejects the Gospel of God, and flings to the wind God's greatest gift and God's costliest sacrifice—a gift and a sacrifice designed to secure the sinner's salvation? And is there no desperate wickedness in that? Is it not a fact that the heart wilfully disregards the threatenings and warnings of God, and treats them only as idle sounds—sounds without truth, meaning, or design? And is there no desperate wickedness in that? Is it not a fact that the heart, notwithstanding all the culture it receives from education, the pulpit, and the press, brings forth nothing but thorns and briers—the thorns and briers of unrighteousness? Is there no desperate wickedness in that? Then the climax of the proof of its desperate wickedness is to be seen in the fearful punishment with which its wickedness will be visited. That punishment is described in most appalling metaphor and figure. The “undying worm” and the “unquenchable fire” are the representations of that punishment with which the wickedness of the heart will be visited; and in the awfulness of the penalty inflicted, we may read the deep criminality of the party on whom such a penalty falls. Men are not led to the gallows and executed for trivial offences, but for *great crimes*; and sinners will not be banished the

presence of God, and the glory of His power, but for *desperate wickedness*. In all righteous governments penalty is always proportionate to criminality. Shall we then, after all this evidence of the deceitfulness and wickedness of the human heart, be told that it is neither deceitful nor wicked? If any should be so bold as to deny this divinely inspired declaration, all we can say is, that the denial of a truth so palpable is in itself a proof of both deceitfulness and wickedness. As this truth rests upon Divine testimony, to deny it is to make God a liar; and the wickedness of thus impugning the veracity of God cannot be surpassed by Satan himself. "Repent, therefore," O man, "of this thy wickedness, and pray God if perhaps this thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee."

How different is the new heart from the old. The new heart is not deceitful, but true; it leads into all truth. The new heart is not desperately wicked, but righteous; it leads in the paths of righteousness. The new heart is a new nature, created in the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness. This new heart is man's great need. Without it he can never escape the doom of the wicked, nor be qualified to share the bliss of the righteous, and to enter into the joy of the Lord. The new heart is pure, pure in its thoughts, desires, and affections. This is its qualification for the celestial state, and is the assurance of its entrance into the presence of God, to behold His glory, and to hymn His praises. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

THE MARRED VESSEL RE-MADE.

JER. xviii. 4: "And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it."

MAN is a vessel of God's making. Man could not have been his own potter. Every creature must have had a creator. Could the whole hosts of angels and archangels, seraphim and cherubim, stand before God, the confession of each and all would be, "We are the clay and thou our Potter, and we all are the work of Thy hand." Every vessel as it came from the hand of the Divine Potter was perfect, it had no flaw in it; it was sound, and well fitted for the Master's use. The name of the Maker was upon every vessel, while its exquisite beauty, and adaptation to the purpose for which it was made, reflected the wisdom and skill of Him who made it. Myriads of these vessels remained uninjured, and continue to this day as beautiful in their construction, as useful and as perfect as the first day they came forth from the hands of the Potter. Others fell from their elevated position, and were broken to pieces. "The angels kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation." Having fallen, they became marred and

broken, and were no longer fitted for the Master's use; hence we are told, "God cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." Broken pottery is fit, only to be cast out as salt which has lost its savour.

The human vessel which the great Potter made from "the dust of the ground," also fell from its pedestal, and though not so utterly broken as were the angelic vessels, so as to be cast away for ever, it was sadly marred, not in the hand of the Potter, but after it had left His hand, and was put in its proper place, the place prepared for its reception. So completely damaged was it, that it was cast out of the garden in which it stood as no longer worthy to remain there. But, as in the vision of the prophet the vessel that was marred was "made again into another vessel as seemed good to the potter to make it," so man, the "earthen vessel," though dreadfully marred, is made by the Divine Potter into another vessel as seemeth good in His sight to make it. It is made a vessel of mercy; it is in itself a trophy of mercy, and filled with Divine mercy, it is made by the merciful Lord to be a very vessel of mercy to others.

The vessels of mercy which God makes out of the fallen and marred ones are not of the same size, or beauty, or utility. All Christians are not Luthers, or Bunyans, or Miltons, or Whitfields, or Wesleys. These vessels of mercy were of no common or ordinary size—they were large and well filled, and the blessings they poured forth were like rivers of living water. Then all Christians have not the meekness

of a Moses, the patience of a Job, and the loveliness of a John. These were beautiful vessels, there was a symmetry and an elegance about them which other vessels did not possess. Then every vessel of mercy is useful, but every vessel is not *equally* useful. Are all apostles like Paul? Are all reformers like Luther? Are all writers like Bunyan? Are all preachers like Spurgeon? The usefulness of these men, in their different departments of service, exceeds that of hundreds of smaller vessels. The Divine Potter has thus seen fit to make His numberless vessels of mercy of various sizes, to give them various shapes and forms of beauty, and to appropriate them, some to higher and some to lower uses; and if it be asked, Why this diversity in size, beauty, and utility? the answer is, "Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight."

Is it asked, And what becomes of these vessels of mercy when they have served all their earthly purposes? Are they broken in pieces, and thrown away? Nay, verily, they are too valuable, too precious to be thus dealt with. The Divine Potter sets a high value on all His vessels of mercy, and when they have answered all the earthly purposes they were made to serve, they are removed by Him to His own mansion in the heavens, there to remain in all their beauty and utility, unbroken and unmarred, through the countless ages of endless duration. This is the destiny of every vessel of mercy, be that vessel great or small—great as an inspired prophet, or small as an infant at the mother's breast. Our Lord, with

a child in His arms, and with the greatest of Christian men by His side, might say in relation to both the child and the Christian, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." These are models of the different vessels of mercy which fill, embellish, and adorn the mansion on high. One vessel differeth from another vessel in glory.

But, besides these vessels of mercy, Scripture tells us of "vessels of wrath." It also informs us of their fate or destiny. It declares that upon them the wrath of God will fall, and to all objectors to the Divine sovereignty in dealing with the two kinds of vessels in question, Paul says: "What, if God willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory?" What if He should thus act, "Is there unrighteousness with God?" Is there unrighteousness in punishing the guilty? Is there unrighteousness in showing mercy, when that mercy flows through righteousness, and does not infract a single item of law or justice? If such be the dealings of God with the race, "Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?" "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Be silent then, O man! be dumb, and open not thy lips; bow to the sceptre of His will, and instead of cavilling at His decision to punish the "vessels of wrath," and to raise to glory the "vessels of mercy," "Flee from the wrath to

come." Flee to the Lord Jesus, and by faith in Him, "lay hold on eternal life." Go, prostrate thyself before Him, and in the attitude of wrestling prayer, cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner." And He will have mercy upon you; and seeing you marred and broken in spirit, will make you another vessel, a "vessel of mercy" prepared unto glory.

"And mercy, then, will breathe within your lips,
Like man new made."

EXISTENCE REGRETTED.

JER. xx. 14 : "Cursed be the day wherein I was born."

JOB and Jeremiah were alike in wishing they had never been-born. They were both men of sorrow, and acquainted with grief; and in the intensity of their grief they came to the irreligious, and we may add irrational, conclusion, that non-existence had been better than existence. "Let the day perish wherein I was born," exclaims Job; and in the same strain of mental anguish, Jeremiah cries, "Cursed be the day wherein I was born."

We have said the conclusion to which these two good men had arrived was both irreligious and irrational. It was so in their case, because being good men—children of God—existence was a blessing to be prized, and not an evil to be mourned over; and had they been as well versed in the design and results of the Divine dispensations as was Paul the apostle, they had said, "Our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." And with such a destiny before them, instead of cursing the day wherein they were born, they would have blessed the day of their birth, as the dawn of an eternal existence, to be hereafter crowned with a glory that fadeth not away.

No ! it is not *good* men that should think for a

moment that non-existence is preferable to life and being. *Ungodly* men may think so with some degree of reason, because in trouble they have no Divine support; in death they have no good hope; and in eternity they have nothing to expect but the penalty of the law—a penalty the nature and duration of which our Lord has described in parable and metaphor the most awful and appalling. Such men when overwhelmed with grief, or when the sorrows of death compass them, or when ushered into the eternal world, have good reason each to say, “Cursed be the day wherein I was born.”

It must, we think, be admitted that non-existence is infinitely preferable to existence, unless by far the greater period of that existence can be spent in pleasure, and not in pain. Now if every ungodly man were to live out his threescore years and ten, and the whole seventy years of his earthly existence were spent in pleasure; yet, as that period is but momentary compared with his future eternal existence, and as that existence is to be one of pain, and not of pleasure, he might with good reason curse the day of his birth, and conclude that, with such a prospect before him as the Scriptures present, it had been better for him never to have been born and brought into existence.

Existence, eternal existence, is a blessing to all unfallen ones, and also to such fallen ones as are redeemed and lifted up from their fallen condition by the death of Christ; but such perpetuity of existence can be no blessing to “the angels who kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation;” nor to

those of the human race who, by their impenitence and unbelief, reject and condemn the great salvation, and thus bring upon themselves a double condemnation—the condemnation of the law, and the condemnation of the Gospel. Amid the many wailings of lost souls in perdition, we cannot but think that one of the loudest there uttered is, “Cursed be the day wherein I was born;” while in heaven, amid the ineffable joy and everlasting rejoicing which abound there among those deemed ; their birth, having culminated in an existence so glorious, calls forth their loftiest praise. It requires no great stretch of imagination to suppose that both Job and Jeremiah are now praising and blessing God, for that very day which in the time of their earthly sorrows they cursed as a day which they wished had never dawned upon them.

Hell and heaven are two great teachers ; they teach lessons which are not learnt on earth, and they wonderfully alter men’s views of Divine dispensations and revealed truths. Hell teaches the folly of wickedness ; heaven the wisdom of holiness. Hell teaches the full enormity of sin, in the penalty it has entailed ; heaven teaches the full benefits of redemption, in the felicity it has secured. Hell leads all its delinquents, in consequence of their delinquency and depravity, to curse the day wherein they were born ; heaven leads all its obedient to bless the day of their birth, as the morning dawn of their now noontide light of honour and glory. Here we know but in part, and we can prophesy but in part. Fuller and wider disclosures are made when

the veil of flesh is rent, and the spirit is ushered into the spirit world. There things are no more seen through a glass darkly, but are viewed in all their reality, and felt in all their power. The telescope of revealed truth, by which the wicked might have looked at the distant hell, and by which the good man did look at his distant heaven, is no longer needed. Man wants no glass through which to look when objects are near, and he standing in their midst. So the sinner in perdition, and the saint in heaven, want revelation no longer to show the one what perdition is, and the other what heaven is. They know from actual vision and personal realization.

Having seen that in some cases there may be good reasons for cursing the day of one's birth, and in other cases more powerful reasons for blessing that day, let it be remembered and borne in mind that God, "not willing that any should perish," *i. e.*, not willing that any should have occasion to curse the day wherein he was born, and wish he had never had an existence, devised and carried out a plan—a plan involving the most costly sacrifice it was possible for even God to make—by which the existence of the fallen ones might be made an eternal blessing. This plan—published in Eden, foreshadowed in type, and proclaimed by prophets—was carried out in the person of the Lord Jesus, and consummated by His death. Yes, it was from the cross that the great and glorious announcement was made, "It is finished." The plan of mercy is finished; and now every man who wishes for a glorious existence, a blessed immortality, has only to look unto Jesus and be saved. Myriads

have looked, and a glorious immortality is their portion. Myriads have refused to look, and a wretched immortality is their inheritance.

No man interested in the death and resurrection of Christ, as were Job and Jeremiah, need curse the day of his birth, and will never curse the day of his death; but every man who neglects the "great salvation" may do both, and we believe will do both. The probability is, that his eternity will be spent in cursing the day that gave him birth, and the day that saw his death. His existence a misery, the wish of his heart will be, Oh that I had never had existence! or having it, Oh that at death I had ceased to be! Vain wish! and, because vain, the poor lost soul does nothing but curse the day that ushered him into existence, and gave him birth and being.

Life is a solemn thing. It has in it everlasting perpetuity, and so also has death; hence with undeniable truthfulness it has been said:—

"It is not all of life to live,
Nor all of death to die."

Life and death are only the seed time. A harvest follows, a harvest of joy or sorrow, of bliss or woe. Does any one ask, And what is the harvest I shall reap from my life and death? Inspiration answers the question, and addressing itself to all men, says, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked, whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap; he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

THE WAY OF LIFE AND THE WAY OF DEATH.

JER. xxi. 8: "And unto this people thou shalt say, Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death."

THE way of life, and the way of death, have once and again been set before the minds of rational and intelligent beings, and it has been left to them to make their choice. These two ways were set before angelic beings. Some of these holy intelligences chose the way of life—others the way of death. Some kept their first estate—others left it. Those who kept their first estate are now realizing all the felicities of life—immortal life. Those who left it are enduring all the miseries of death—eternal death. How strange that rational and intelligent creatures, without any external influence or temptation, should choose the way of death in preference to the way of life. This is a great mystery; too profound for finite minds to fathom. The origin of sin, or the making choice of the way of death, has occupied the thoughts of some of the noblest intellects, and engaged the pen of some of the ablest writers; and the subject, we hesitate not to say, is involved in the same mystery as before men thought and wrote on the deep and mysterious fact.

After angels had sinned, and for their sin were cast out of heaven, it pleased God to create man, and before our first parents He placed, as in the case of the angels, the way of life, and the way of death, and virtually said to them, Make your choice. They did so, and both of them, under the influence of temptation, chose the way of death, and their posterity making the same wretched choice, "death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." That our first parents should have chosen the way of death is a mystery; but the mystery is not so great as that angels should have made the same choice, because in Eden there was a tempter and a temptation, while in heaven there was neither tempter nor temptation, and yet in the absence of both, the angels sinned.

The angels sinning without a tempter and a temptation, were left to reap the consequences of their guilt. Man sinning under the influence of both, provision was made for his recovery in the person of the Lord Jesus, who was ordained from everlasting to be the Saviour of men, and who in the fulness of time appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. The sacrifice was made, on the ground of which, mercy can now be righteously shewn to the guilty, and the way of life, and the way of death, are set before us in the Gospel of God's dear Son.

But the way of life in the Gospel is very different from that which was set before angels in heaven, and Adam in Eden. In the case of the unfallen, the way of life was *obedience*. In the case of the

fallen, the way of life is *faith*. In the one case it was, "Do this and thou shalt live." In the other it is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." And, says Christ, "He that believeth in me shall never die." The way of life could not be *obedience* in the case of the *guilty*—nor could it have been *faith* in the case of the *not guilty*. "By the deeds of the law," *i.e.*, by obedience, "no flesh living can be justified," because "all have sinned, and are guilty before God." By faith, the not guilty could not be justified, being justified already by deeds of law, in other words, by obedience to the Divine will. When, therefore, in the Gospel the Lord Jesus says, "Behold I set before you the way of life, and the way of death," let us distinctly understand, and never fail to remember, that the way of life is *faith* in His atoning blood and justifying righteousness, and the way of death is *unbelief*, or the rejection of the atoning sacrifice. The two ways could not be more clearly pointed out than in the two brief sentences of the Lord Himself, "He that believeth shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be condemned."

Of these two ways, the one is described by our Lord as narrow, and few walking therein, and the other as broad, and many thronging it. The way of life is narrow, in that only one class of persons can walk therein—it does not admit of a promiscuous crowd. The way of death is broad, in that all classes of persons can walk there, and crowds can muster there, and walk together in all their sinful delights and sensual gratifications.

Now that the many should choose the way of death, and the few the way of life, is a fact for which there must be a cause. One might have thought that as life is infinitely preferable to death, that the many, if not all, would have chosen the way of life, and that few, if any, would have chosen the way of death. How then can we account for this difference of choice, and that the many should prefer the way of death to the way of life? The only cause that can be assigned for this strange and fatal choice on the part of the many is *depravity*—the depravity of the heart, the affections, the whole nature. “Men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil;” the result of a depraved nature. And men prefer death to life because their affections are depraved—the result of a depraved heart. But for the depravity of the heart, men could never love darkness rather than light, nor prefer the way of death to the way of life. That the depravity of the heart is the cause of this wretched choice, is obvious from the fact, that as soon as this depravity is removed, the choice is changed, and men from that very hour love light rather than darkness, and prefer the way of life to the way of death.

Thus man’s great need is *regeneration*—the renewal of his entire nature. Until this takes place, man can have no solid hope of a blessed future beyond the grave. Life, eternal life, he will never choose. The Lord Jesus recognised and affirmed the absolute necessity of this change, and declared, “Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.” As then regeneration is man’s

great need, and as this regeneration can only be effected by the power of the Spirit, the question, how is that power to be obtained, becomes a matter of vital importance. Scripture, we think, is clear in showing, that the only way to obtain this divine power is by prayer—earnest, wrestling, importunate prayer.

Let, then, the Church give herself unto prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and when the Spirit is poured out from on high as in the day of Pentecost, and as in the days of Whitfield and Wesley, men will choose the way of life; and the narrow path, instead of having but here and there a traveller, will have multitudes walking therein, in their way to the kingdom. O Spirit of the living God, rend thine heavens, and come down !

“ Spirit of everlasting grace,
Infinite source of life, come down ;
These tombs unlock, these dead upraise,
Thy glorious power and love make known.”

AN IGNOMINIOUS BURIAL.

JER. xxii. 19: "He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem."

THE end of some men is very different from what might have been expected, considering their parentage, education, and advantages. Jehoiakim being the son of a king, it were natural to suppose that when he died he would have been buried with all the pomp and pageantry of a prince. And as his father was a pious man, one might have hoped that his death had been the death of the righteous, and his burial one, over which great lamentation would be made. Instead of this, he was "buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem," and over him no lamentation was made. And the sole cause of this ignominious death and burial was sin, rebellion against God.

What a blighting, withering thing is sin! How it blights every fair prospect, withers every cherished expectation, and blasts every fond hope!

When Jehoiakim was a youth he had the fairest of all earthly prospects, but sin blighted it; he might have cherished the expectation of being honoured and revered, but sin withered it; he might have hoped that when he died he should be buried amid the tears and lamentations of admiring survivors,

but sin blasted it. Sin destroyed his every fair prospect, his every cherished expectation, his every fond hope, and when he had filled up the measure of his iniquity he died, and was "buried with the burial of an ass." The earth closes upon this unhappy man, and we see him no more, but a burial so degrading was not the *end* of the man, nor the *worst* thing that could have befallen him. Many a good man who has lived to the glory of God, and died in the faith of Jesus, has had no better burial. Put to death by bloodthirsty persecutors, funeral rites have been refused, and he has been buried with the burial of an ass. The burial of a man is of little moment. Tell us not how a man is buried—tell us how he lived, and how he died. Such a burial as Jehoiakim's might have been the very climax of martyrdom, and have added a lustre to his memory; and so it would have been had he lived to the glory of God, and died in the defence of the truth. But dying as he did, in his iniquity, his burial was the very acme of degradation, and reflected infamy and disgrace on his life career.

Let a man but live as Paul lived, who made Christ the end of his life, and when he dies it will matter but little whether he be buried with the burial of an ass, or with the burial of a prince. Burial affects no man's future destiny, whether he be interred as a brute, or lain in the grave with all the pomp and splendour of royalty. The future destiny of a man depends upon *life*, not upon death and burial. As is the life, so will be the destiny. Destiny is the fruit of life. As is the tree, so will

be the fruit. Destiny is the harvest of life: "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." Had, therefore, the life of Jehoiakim been the reflex of the life of his pious father, Josiah; had he walked in the steps of his father, breathed his spirit, copied his example, he had died a very different death, and had been honoured with a very different burial, while his destiny had been as felicitous and glorious as it is now wretched and forlorn. Piety exalts—wickedness abases. Piety raises the beggar from the dunghill, and sets him among princes—wickedness dethrones princes, and sets them among beggars; and in the case of Jehoiakim, it set him even below beggars, in that his burial was that of a brute, and not of a man. Piety is God's high road to heaven. Impiety is Satan's high road to perdition. Josiah, the pious father, trod the one path—Jehoiakim, his wicked son, the other; the son rushed on in mad haste to everlasting ruin—the father walked calmly and safely on in the way to happiness and to God.

That godly men should have ungodly children is a problem not easy to solve. That Josiah should have a Shallum and a Jehoiakim, both wicked men; that David should have an Absalom, a rebellious son; that Eli should have a Hophni and a Phinehas, "sons of Belial, that knew not the Lord";—that these godly men should have such ungodly children is a mystery which, with our present light and knowledge, we are unable to explain. Some have thought that the explanation might be found in the want of parental discipline and proper training, and great stress has been laid on the proverb,

"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." But this supposes what has to be proved—namely, that in the case of godly parents having ungodly children, there has been neither parental discipline nor proper training; also that piety in children is the natural result of parental discipline and religious training. But what are the facts of the case? Are they not these—that piety is sometimes found in the children of godless parents, where there has been no religious training at all; while impiety will sometimes be seen in the children of godly parents, who have striven to bring them up in the fear of the Lord? With these facts before us, we must leave the mystery which surrounds the subject to be solved in the clearer light of a brighter day and a better world; but the facts themselves clearly teach, that youthful piety is not the *natural* result of early training, however excellent that training may have been.

What, then, it may be asked, means the proverb already quoted, "Train up a child," &c.? We submit it simply means that, as a general rule, early education is influential in after life; that habits early formed by tuition, are seldom departed from in old age; but then we must remember that religious education does not always form a religious character, and that religious *habits* may be formed, without religion as a *vital principle* taking possession of the heart.

As illustrative of the effects of early training, we may remark that, with but few exceptions, children that are trained in any denominational school, generally identify themselves in after life with that

denomination in which they were trained. But then, while as a general rule, a child trained in any denominational school does not depart from that denomination when he gets old, yet he may be as far from God, and as alienated from Christ in his heart, as if he had not been trained at all. And if it be asked, Why cannot a child be trained to become a real Christian, as well as a denominationalist? we reply, Because to become a Christian is to have a new nature, a new life, which no kind or amount of training can possibly give. Nothing can be trained but what *has life*. You cannot train a *dead* vine, or a *dead* tree. Training supposes *life*. Now, as no child has by nature, religious life, but only a mental and moral life, the child can only be trained mentally and morally—mentally to think, and morally to act. Thus to train, we hold to be the duty of every parent. And then we hold it also to be the duty of every Christian parent, earnestly to pray, that God would be pleased to breathe into his child the breath of life, the life of real religion—that life without which a correct creed, and a cold morality, will leave the soul utterly unfitted to be “a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light.”

Let, then, parents remember, that while it is their duty to “train up their children in the way they should go,” so far as religious truth and moral conduct are concerned, it is God’s prerogative to make them religious, to quicken them into a new life, and to save them with an everlasting salvation. *Train*, then, *train*—but not only train—*pray*. Pray for the vivifying, the life-giving influence of the

Holy Spirit; and if you should see in your children the germ of the new life, developing itself in early piety, you will see as Christians the realization of your fondest hopes, and the consummation of your highest wishes, and you may then reckon, that whatever may happen, their end will be peace, their departure triumphant, their burial honourable, and their destiny glorious.

IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS.

JER. xxiii. 6: "The Lord our righteousness."

THERE is but one possible way by which the innocent may be treated as guilty, and the guilty treated as innocent; namely, by imputation—sin imputed to the innocent, and righteousness imputed to the guilty. Christ, the innocent, could only be "made sin" by imputation; man, the guilty, could only be "made righteous" in the same way. The doctrine of imputation has been objected to, on the alleged ground that it is not fair to make this twofold transfer of sin to the one and righteousness to the other. But wherein, we ask, is the unfairness? What law does it violate? What principle does it set aside? If a creditor be willing that another than his debtor should pay him what is owing, and another be found willing to do so, where is the unfairness of such a transaction?

But, say some, is not that a very different thing from the imputation of sin to the innocent, and of righteousness to the guilty? We say, No. The *principle* is precisely the same. In the one case the creditor is willing that the debts of his debtor should be transferred to another, and another is found willing to have them transferred, and in due time to pay them. In the other case God was

willing that the sins of His people should be transferred to Christ, and Christ was willing that the transfer should be made. The transfer was made. "God laid upon Him the iniquity of us all," and in due time "Christ died for the ungodly;" and thus the mighty debt was paid, cancelled by atoning blood. We submit, therefore, that the commercial and the Gospel transaction are, in *principle*, identically the same. In both cases law is honoured, righteousness maintained, and justice is done.

But while in this transference of debt in the one case, and the imputation of sin in the other, there is justice, there is something more—there is *grace*; and one hardly knows which shines with the greater lustre, the justice or the grace. Is it asked, And where is the grace in these cases of transfer and imputation? We reply, In the willingness of the one party to have the debts transferred, and in the other to have the sins imputed. The man who is willing to have the debts of another placed to his account, and to pay them, not only shows a regard for justice, but manifests a graciousness of character which all must admire. So Christ, being willing to have the sins of men reckoned to Him, not only showed a strong regard for justice, but manifested at the same time the riches of His grace. No man is under obligation to pay the debts of another; if he were, there could be no grace in the matter. Christ was under no obligation to atone for, and put away the sins of men; if He had been, then there had been no grace in the transaction. It is the *willingness*, the unconstrained *willingness*, to meet

the claims of law for another that makes the great act of imputation an act both of *justice* and of *grace*.

"But is it just," say some, "that the righteousness of one should be imputed to another?" Others ask, How is it possible that a man, if not righteous in himself, can be made righteous by the righteousness of another? We reply, We see no more injustice in the imputation of righteousness to another, than in the imputation of sin to another, provided the party be willing that his righteousness be imputed. Then as to the supposed impossibility of a man becoming righteous by the righteousness of another, we see nothing more impossible in this than in a man becoming rich by the riches of another. Suppose a creditor were willing, not only that the debts of his debtor should be paid by another, but also that his own personal wealth should be given to him. This is a possible case, and the justice of such a transaction who can question? So if Christ were willing, not only that man's sins should be reckoned to Him, but also that His own personal righteousness should be imputed to man, the transaction is as just in this case as in the other, and thus it is that Christ becomes "*the Lord our righteousness*."

The objections raised and urged against the doctrine of imputed righteousness have, we conceive, been founded on a misapprehension of the whole case. The opponents of the doctrine have failed to distinguish between *imputed* righteousness, which is a legal transaction, and *personal* righteousness, which is a sanctification of the heart. They have

asked, How can imputed righteousness—a righteousness which is not a man's own—make him either holy, or even moral; and if a man be neither holy, nor even moral, how can he be deemed righteous, how can he be, in any proper sense of the term, righteous at all? We reply, that while *imputed* righteousness cannot of itself make a man holy or *personally* righteous, it can make him *legally* so; so that, just as Christ was *legally* made sin for us by the imputation of sin to Him, so we are *legally* made righteous by the imputation of righteousness to us. But then say they, What is the use of this imputed righteousness without the personal? If man be not personally holy, how can he be personally happy? and how can he be “meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light”? Besides which, is it not written that “without holiness,” *personal* holiness, “no man shall see the Lord”?

Now, when it is asked, What is the use of imputed righteousness without the personal? we reply, that, while they are essentially distinct, they are never disunited. Righteousness is never imputed in the absence of faith. It is called “*the righteousness of faith.*” By faith we receive the righteousness which makes the sinner just—in other words, which secures his justification before God; and this very faith purifies the heart, and thus leads to that personal holiness, or righteousness, which is the Christian's meetness for heaven. Now we cannot but think that, had the opponents of the doctrine of imputed righteousness but clearly seen the great difference there is between the imputed and the personal,

and had they also observed that, while there is an essential difference in the two, yet the two are always blended and always co-exist, they would gladly have embraced the doctrine, and not have treated it with the contempt some of them have shown—one of their number having the impiety to call it “imputed nonsense.”

This great and glorious doctrine of “the Lord our righteousness” we take to be one of the foundation-stones of Christianity, one of the pillars of the Christian edifice. In the absence of this doctrine, we see not what is to support our faith in complete justification before God, or on what our belief is to rest of being presented faultless before the throne of God, without spot or blemish. How, we ask, is it possible that, on the ground of personal righteousness, a sinner like man can be justified in the sight of God? How is it possible that Jesus Christ can present a *sinner* before His Father *faultless* and without *blame*? And yet, if imputed righteousness be denied, there is none other than a man’s personal righteousness in which he can trust for such a presentation as this. What! justification, perfect and complete, on the ground of a man’s personal righteousness! The idea is monstrous. What! faultlessness, blamelessness, on such a ground as this! The thought is as irrational as it is unscriptural. We believe in complete justification—in Christ’s presentation of His people to the Eternal Father, spotless and without blame, and this faith of ours rests, not on personal, but on imputed righteousness. Faith resting here, rests on

a rational, scriptural basis—on rock, and not on sand. Let, then, the doctrine be denied as it may. Let it be treated with all the sneers and contempt the carnal mind can heap upon it, we will glory in it; we will make it the ground of our confidence, the theme of our teaching, and the burden of our song. Yes, we will sing in life, and we will sing in death, "The Lord our righteousness;" and then, passing into the heavens, and standing before His presence, we will take up the strain, and cry—

"Thou art the Lord our righteousness,
Thou art Thine Israel's boast."

A BITTER DIET.

JER. xxiii. 15 : "Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall."

THIS Divine threatening was uttered against certain false and wicked prophets. All that is false and wicked is in God's sight hateful. He hates it with perfect hatred, He loathes it. To His pure mind it is as wormwood and as gall. When, therefore, men give to God their wormwood of sin, and their gall of iniquity, it is no marvel that He should feed them with the wormwood of suffering, and the gall of pain. God has every kind of food at His command, and He can feed His creatures with whatsoever He please. He can feed them with "the finest of the wheat;" He can feed them with "milk and honey;" He can feed them with "wormwood and gall." When a man's ways please the Lord, He not only makes his enemies to be at peace with him, but gives to him "wisdom and knowledge and joy," and thus feeds him with the finest of the wheat. When a people cheerfully obey the leadings of Divine providence, and the commands of the Divine will, He brings them as it were into a good land, favours them with much rich enjoyment, and thus feeds them as with milk and honey. But when a people anger God with their sins, and weary Him

with their iniquities, He brings them into the prison of adversity, or the chamber of affliction, and there feeds them with wormwood, and makes them drink the water of gall.

Thus the Great Parent—the Universal Householder—spreads different tables for different portions of His numerous family, giving to each the meat and the drink His wisdom dictates, His justice requires, or His kindness prompts. So loving is His nature, so kind is His heart, and so fond is He of His children, that He never, we believe, feeds them with wormwood and with gall, except when they have provoked Him to anger, or when the tendencies of their moral nature are such as to require this bitter food, and this bitter drink. “He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.” He does not give the wormwood and the gall willingly; He gives it as a loving parent would give medicine to a child, not willingly, but of necessity, to the end that the child may have its strength renewed, or its disease stayed in its progress. And so beneficial at times has been this mode of treatment, that many a child of God has blessed his gracious and loving Father for the wormwood and the gall, while others have prayed, “Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil;” and not unfrequently the bitterest diet has issued in the happiest results.

But the wormwood and the gall do not always act medicinally, nor are they always given to that end, but as a punishment for sin, as the bitter ex-

pressions of the Divine anger. God gave to Cain the wormwood and the gall as a punishment for the awful crime of murdering his brother Abel. He gave the same to Pharaoh as a punishment for his conduct to the people of Israel; and without specifying other cases, there are multitudes of instances upon record in which God has filled the cup of many a wicked man, and many a godless woman, with these bitter ingredients, as a punishment for their wickedness, and as a reward for their iniquity. We read of "the pleasures of sin," and no doubt there are pleasures in sin to those whose nature is sinful, unrenewed by Divine grace; but then these pleasures are only for a season, they are of short duration, while they are invariably followed by pain, the wormwood and the gall. The greater the pleasures of sin, the greater the pain that follows. The sweeter the cup of sinful delights, the more bitter the cup which comes after. Sin may be as honey to the taste, but in its results, sooner or later, it shall be to the soul bitter as wormwood and as gall.

Illustrations of this sad truth may be gathered from troubled consciences, death-bed sighs and sorrows, the bitterness of despair in some cases, and the gall of regrets in others; and the last, and not the least of these illustrations, is to be seen in the "weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth," which our Lord declares will be the portion of all workers of iniquity. *Here*, their meat and their drink were the pleasures of sin. *There*, their meat is wormwood, and their drink gall. O man! sinful

man! wouldst thou escape that world where these bitters flow in one eternal stream? There is but one way of escape. You must give up "the pleasures of sin." You must "come out of the world, and be separate." You must take up the cross, and follow the Lamb whithersoever He leads; and if suffering and shame attend thy course, like the Great Master, you must *endure* the cross and *despise* the shame, and then, like Him, you shall sit down at the right hand of God, and for ever drink of the river of His pleasures. Oh! what a doom awaits the wicked! Oh! what a destiny awaits the righteous! As we watch by the bedside of the dying saint, we hear him saying, in the prospect of his departure—

"I go to life, and not to death,
From darkness to life's native sky;
I go from sickness and from pain,
To health and immortality."

As we stand by the bedside of the dying sinner, and see him die without God, and without hope, we follow him in imagination into the next world, the world of spirits, and there we hear his doom pronounced by one of the ministers of Divine justice:—

"Thou livest, and must ever live,
But life is now thy foe;
Thine is the sorrow-shrivelled brow;
Thine the eternal heartache now;
'Neath the long burden thou must bow,
The living death of woe."

And then, he who sang the songs of mirth and

merriment, who lived in pleasure on the earth, and was wanton, is told—

“Thy songs are at an end; thy harp
Shall solace thee no more;
All mirth has perished on thy grave;
The melody that could not save
Has died upon death's sullen wave,
That flung thee on this shore.”

With such a picture of the doom and destiny of the wicked, who would not lift up his heart to heaven, and cry, “Let me die the death of the *righteous*, and let my last end be like unto *his*.”

CHAFF AND WHEAT.

JER. xxiii. 28 : "What is the chaff to the wheat ? saith the Lord."

UNDUE importance is often attached to things of little value ; and but little importance is sometimes given to things of far greater worth. God looks upon things according to their relative worth and value. All mere notions and fancies, which false prophets or teachers entertain and cherish, He regards as *chaff*. His own word He calls *wheat*. The false prophet He looks upon as a dreamer, and says, "The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream ; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat ? saith the Lord." What are the dreams floating in the mind of the false prophet to the ever-living realities of the truths of My word—what, but as the chaff to the wheat ?

It is painful to see the importance which, in some quarters, is given to outward rites and gorgeous ceremonies. By many, these things are regarded with a devotion amounting almost to idolatry, while the great verities of the Gospel are almost ignored, as if they were matters of small moment ; but "What is the chaff to the wheat ?

saith the Lord." In the present day an extraordinary amount of money is spent, and devotion shown, in the erection of costly sanctuaries, and in the beautifying of others already erected. With pastor and people the great object to be obtained, in many cases, is a handsome place of worship, with all the decorations of a palace ; while but little attention is given to the Church, the spiritual temple, either as to its extension or edification. Now, while we would not urge a single objection to the erection of sanctuaries, with some amount of architectural beauty, and some little artistic adornment, yet, when we see more attention given by pastor and deacons to these things, than to the beauty of the real Church, and her adornment in all that is lovely and of good report, we think they may fairly be asked, "What is the chaff to the wheat?" and should be reminded that such is the sanctuary, however costly and beautiful, to the Church worshipping therein.

This erroneous estimate of things, too often seen in the Church, is more frequently seen in the world. Worldly men set an undue value on things seen, and attach little or no importance to things unseen. The comparative worth of the two, the seen and the unseen, the Apostle gives us in his designation of each ; the one he calls *temporal*, and the other *eternal*. The contrast is striking—it could not be greater. The things seen are only of momentary value, while those not seen are of infinite worth. When, therefore, worldly men give their whole soul to objects of sight and sense, and pay no attention

to objects of faith and trust, we may, in very pity, say to them, "What is the chaff to the wheat?" Such are the things seen, to those which are not seen; the things seen are chaff, which the wind of time will blow clean away—the things not seen are wheat, on which the soul will feed and live—

" While life, and thought, and being last,
And immortality endures! "

We cannot fail to observe, also, that men destitute of the grace of God, are so earthly and sensual, as to attach a far higher importance to the body than to the soul. For the gratification of the body money will be spent without stint; for the health of the body no expense is deemed too great; and for the life of the body a man would give his all—"All that a man hath will he give for his life." But the soul—what do men, destitute of vital religion, care for the soul? What effort do they put forth to secure its welfare and happiness? What do they *do* to be saved? Just nothing at all, as if the immortal soul were as chaff, and the mortal body as wheat. This great fatal mistake, the result of a deceitful heart, and the influence of the old arch-deceiver, is that into which myriads have fallen. The eye of Jesus saw this mistake in the days of His flesh, and in a manner the most solemn and impressive pointed it out, saying, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" And now, from the Holy Oracle,

comes the question to these lovers of the body and practical despisers of the soul: "What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord." Such is the body to the soul.

This question, the devoted servant of God, who labours in word and doctrine for the glory of God and the welfare of souls, may put to all those who would undervalue or despise his high calling—his holy vocation. Young men who have devoted themselves to the ministry of the Gospel; others who have left all, and gone as missionaries to the heathen; colporteurs, who travel far and wide to disseminate the word of truth;—these servants of the Most High God have been deemed unwise in the selection of their calling, and some of them have been asked, Why did not you pursue some learned profession? you might then have risen to fame. Or why did not you go into mercantile life? you might then have amassed wealth. Or why did not you give your attention to the arts and sciences? you might then have risen to distinction in the world as a man of science. The answer to all these questions is, "What is the chaff to the wheat?" We do not undervalue the learned professions, they are honourable and important; we do not underrate a mercantile life, we must have merchants and traders; we do not despise the arts and sciences, they are exceedingly useful in relation to the welfare and prosperity of a country; but, compared with our high calling of God, as the messengers of His mercy and the preachers of His truth, they are only as chaff to the wheat.

The results, be it remembered, of professional men, mercantile men, scientific men, however valuable and important, have only a *time* interest, while the results of the labours of the servants of God have an *eternal* interest. With the passing away of the world, there will be the passing away of all time pursuits, and the results of these pursuits, like the morning cloud and early dew, will also disappear; while through eternity, the results of evangelical labour will be realized, in all their augmented and ever augmenting value and glory. Let not, then, the men of other vocations despise the preachers of Christ's Gospel, even though some of them, like Peter and John, should be "unlearned and ignorant men;" but if they should be despised for their want of learning, and if the great central truth of their preaching should be branded as foolishness, they, conscious of the infinite superiority of their own high calling, may reply to these despisers of the cross, and say, "What is the chaff to the wheat?" Such is your profession to ours, and such is your teaching to ours.

Paul once said, "I magnify mine office." Every minister of Christ's Gospel may do the same; nor can it be magnified too highly. There is no office under heaven comparable to it. He who sits upon a throne, and sways a sceptre over a whole nation, holds a position of less honour, less dignity, and of less importance to the future well-being of men than he who is an ambassador of the cross—"a legate of the skies." Kings reign over the bodies of men; the ambassadors of the cross sway the minds of men.

Kings aim to promote the temporal interests of their subjects; the ambassadors of the cross aim to secure the eternal interests of all who come within the reach of their influence. Kings belong to a royal ancestry; the ambassadors of the cross to a royal priesthood—a priesthood Divine. “What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord.” Such is the office of the kings of the earth, to that held by the ambassadors of the cross of Christ. Paul was a greater man than Cæsar; while his office, which he magnified, towered infinitely above that of Rome’s great emperor. The kingdom over which Cæsar reigned was one of great territorial extent and political influence; but when it reached the zenith of its power, it began to decay, and in process of time the historian had to write its “decline and fall.” But who shall write the decline and fall of that kingdom which Christ founded, and of which Paul was a faithful ambassador? “The kingdom of Christ is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominions endure throughout all generations.” “What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord.”

How truly, and forcibly, has it been said by a great poet, that—

“An empire, in His balance, weighs a grain.”

And all empires, though mighty as the Chaldean, vast as the Roman, and extensive as the British, are only as the chaff of the summer’s threshing-floor, which will be all swept off, to be seen no more. How different God’s estimate of the soul. This, according to the same great poet, weighed in the

Divine balances, outweighs the whole universe of worlds which exist in the infinitude of space. And a great modern philosopher has said, "There is nothing great in the world but man, and there is nothing great in man but the soul." This dictum of the philosopher is justified by the question of the Saviour—" *What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*"

GOD'S WORD A MIGHTY POWER.

JER. xxiii. 29: "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?"

FIRE is a powerful element. A hammer is a mighty instrument. The word of God is like unto both. Fire possesses a fourfold power: a power to destroy, a power to melt, a power to refine, and a power to warm and comfort. The word of God possesses the same. First, it possesses a destructive and consuming power. We are only uttering the simple facts of truth and soberness when we say, it has reduced, as it were, to ashes some of the temples of heathenism, and burnt up many of the habitations of cruelty. It has consumed some of the worst forms of tyranny and despotism under which our own country has groaned. It has destroyed in its flame the demon of slavery, with all its brutal manacles and chains, and its accursed weapons of torture. It has even entered the human heart, and consumed some of the very worst evils which lurked and reigned there. "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord." It is, it is, cries the Church of the living God, in that it has consumed and destroyed from off the face of the earth much of the idolatry, the cruelty, the tyranny, that afflicted the human race,

and in many cases has consumed the evils that were the bane and the poison of the human heart.

But fire has not only the power to destroy; it has a power to melt and subdue. And this power the word of God also possesses. Under the reading and preaching of this word, hearts hard as stone have been melted into contrition and sorrow; and when thus melted, they have been cast into the Gospel mould, the mould which gives to human hearts the very image and likeness of Christ. By the word of the Lord three thousand were thus melted on the day of Pentecost; and in every subsequent age, from that day till now, the word of the Lord has melted some of the hardest of hearts, and moulded them into the very image of God. Man by nature bears the image of the earthly, but when melted down under the power of the Word and cast into the Gospel mould, he bears the image of the heavenly. It is also to be observed that when under some painfully afflictive providence the mind has been rebellious, and most unwilling to yield to and acquiesce in the will of God, some portion of the word of God has been brought home with power to the mind, such for example as, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" or, "Be still, and know that I am God;" and the rebellious will has been subdued, and the heart melted into a state of resignation and acquiescence, so that the confession has been made, "It is the Lord." "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord." Yes, says the softened and subdued

child of sorrow, who once rebelled against the Divine dispensations, it is, in that it has melted me down into a state of quiet submission to Thy holy and blessed mind and will.

Fire also has a power to refine, and to purify. But for the furnace, we should have but very little pure gold, or refined silver. Need I say that the word of God has a like power to refine, and to purify the soul of man? But for that word, we should look in vain for the "pure in heart," and the refined in morals. In countries where the word of God is unknown, purity is unknown, and moral refinement is nowhere to be seen; and in countries where the word of God abounds, there is no purity of heart, nor high morality of life, except in cases where the word is cordially embraced and firmly believed. The word of God, applied by the power of the Holy Ghost, is the great purifier and refiner of the human soul; it rids the soul of its earthly alloy, and gives to it all the brightness of silver, and the brilliancy of gold. "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord." It is, in that it does for the precious soul what fire does for the precious metals—refines and purifies.

Nor must we forget that fire has a power to afford comfort to those who are cold, especially when the winter sets in, in all its severity and rigour. And can we fail to remember the comfort which God's word affords in seasons of adversity and sorrow, when one of the winters of life sets in upon us in all its freezing coldness and hoar-frost whiteness? In such a season, many a good man has had his heart

warmed and comforted by promises, such as "Fear not, I am with thee." "I will never leave thee; I will never, no never, forsake thee." "As thy day, so shall thy strength be." And not only by such promises as these has his heart been warmed and comforted, but by other portions of God's word, which are the very bases of his hope, and the earnest of his inheritance. "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord." It is, it is, cries the man of God, for it has warmed and cheered my heart, when all my earthly comforts have been frozen up, and the cold and cutting winds of adversity have howled about my dwelling. Around the great truths of Thy word have I sat, as around a bright and cheerful fire in winter, and the comfort—O how great!

"I love the sacred book of God,
No other can its place supply."

Like as a fire it warms, and cheers, and comforts, amid life's sternest winters, when the cold is intense, and the snow-storms are frequent and severe.

The Lord having likened His word to a fire, next compares it to a hammer. "Is not my word like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?" Here we must bear in mind that a hammer, however heavy, has no power to break the rock in pieces unless used by the brawny and strong arm of the quarryman. So the word of God has no power to break the rocky hearts of sinners, unless wielded by the strong arm of the Spirit. Thousands and tens of thousands hear the word of God Sabbath after Sabbath, whose hearts are not broken by it. It comes to them in

word only, with no hammer-like power. But when hearts are broken into penitence and contrition by the word, it is because that word has been struck home by an arm Omnipotent, an arm Divine. It has come then "not in word only, but in power, in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance."

Truth is mighty, but it is only "mighty through God." In the hands of man it is like a hammer in the hands of a child—it is powerless, it breaks nothing. Such being the case, the cry of the whole Church should be, "Arm of the Lord, awake, awake!" Take thine own word, and with it strike with resistless force the hearts of the impenitent, and thus break them. This the Lord did in the days of the Apostles, and from many a broken heart there went up the cry, "What must I do to be saved?" In the days of Whitfield and Wesley the Lord made His own word the mighty instrument of conversion; multitudes were added to the Lord. And in every age, and in every place where "the truth as it is in Jesus" has been faithfully preached, there has been witnessed, as the blessed result, "repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." "Is not my word as a hammer, saith the Lord, that breaks the rock in pieces?" And as we look upon the multitudes of humble and contrite ones, suing for the mercy of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, we are constrained to admit that "the word of God is quick and powerful;" heavier than the heaviest hammer, and "sharper than any two-edged sword."

Is it asked, And how does the Lord subsequently

deal with those whose hearts He has broken with the hammer of His word? The answer is, "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds." He restores comforts unto them, He gives them "peace through believing." They have "peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." God, in His dealings with sinners, first wounds, then heals; first kills, then makes alive; first breaks the old rocky heart in pieces, then makes a new heart—a heart as full of love as the other was of enmity, as full of zeal as the other was of sloth, as full of good works as the other was of evil. The man is a new creature, a specimen of God's workmanship, a monument of God's mercy. "By the grace of God" he is what he is: pure in heart, holy in desire, fervent in aspiration, fitted and destined to glorify God in his body and spirit, which are His. As we look upon this work of God—the noblest production of His power, the purest type, the highest style of man—filled with admiration at the sight, our heart's desire and prayer to God is, that He may still make His word like as a fire, and as a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces, and thus, out of this stone quarry of human nature, form a people for Himself, to show forth His praise. "Thine, O Lord, is the kingdom, the *power*, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen."

HEART KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

JER. xxiv. 7: "And I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart."

EVERY rational and intelligent mind knows God as the Author of creation, to whom, as Creator, reverence is due, and by whom obedience is required, so far as His will is revealed and made known. A written revelation is not necessary to teach men the existence of God. This is taught by the things which are seen, so that every man born into the world has proof positive and demonstrative of the Divine power and Godhead; and if, after these infallible proofs, he should deny the Divine Godhead, or fail to render the homage and obedience which are due to His name as the Creator and Upholder of all things, he is without excuse. If man knew not God, and could not know Him—if he had not the intellectual ability to see God in His works, or if he had no moral consciousness of God, he could not be held accountable either for his faith or his works. In that case he would be as irresponsible as the beasts which perish. For him there could be no future, either of rewards or punishments. But now that the things seen de-

clare to man the unseen, even the unseen God, and give to him a moral consciousness of God, he is bound to worship Him as God, and to obey His will so far as he knows it. Failing in this, he is guilty, and will be judged according to the law which is written on his conscience, or moral consciousness. "Where there is no law there is no transgression;" but where there is law there is transgression, and where there is transgression there must be penalty or punishment, otherwise law is not law, but a dead letter, and utterly useless as to all practical ends and purposes.

But while every man possesses this intellectual knowledge of God, no man in a state of nature has a *heart* knowledge of God. This knowledge of God is a gift, a gift Divine; hence the promise, "I will *give* them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord." But what is this heart knowledge of God, and wherein does it differ from that which is intellectual? The chief element of heart knowledge is love, and in this it differs from that which is mental or personal. Multitudes knew Christ personally—He mixed with the multitude and taught them; "He was made flesh and dwelt among them," but they did not know Him. "The light shined in darkness, but the darkness comprehended it not." Multitudes now know Him as the Christ of God, the Saviour of the world, but of Him they have no heart knowledge. Before their eyes He is "evidently set forth" in the Gospel of His grace, but they take no notice of Him, and pay Him no mark of honour. He is present at the sacramental table, but they come

not near. He sends out His servants and invites them to a banquet, a feast of good things, but they decline the invitation, and make excuses. O if they did but *know* Him, they would not see Him in the Gospel without paying Him the reverence due to His name. They would not be absent from the table of communion, where He is always present, nor would they decline the invitation to come to the feast which He has so graciously provided for their special benefit. They know Him only with the understanding; they know Him not with the heart. To know Christ only with the understanding, is the knowledge which Satan and his legions possess. Yes, "the devils know, and tremble too."

To know God, and His Son Jesus Christ, is life eternal; but then this knowledge is that of the heart, a knowledge in which love is the prime element. Indeed, to know God, and His Son Jesus Christ, is only another expression for love of God and Christ. Love of God is knowledge of God. Love of Christ is knowledge of Christ. It is knowledge the most intimate, it issues in real fellowship. It is knowledge the most delightful, it fills the soul with joy and peace. It is knowledge the most lasting, it never loses the recollection of its object. The memory of the mind may lose much that it once contained. The memory of the heart loses nothing. See then the superiority of heart knowledge, to that which is mental. The man to whom the Lord has given a heart to know Him, has in him all the elements of bliss, involving, as that knowledge does, the truest fellowship, the

purest joy, and everlasting remembrance of its object. This is life eternal—this the knowledge which has in it eternal, life. The fact is, there is no real life without real love. *Love* is the very essence of *life*. It is the essence of the Divine life. It is the essence of the angelic life. It is the essence of the glorified life. It is the essence of Church life: It is the essence of domestic life. Without love there would be no life in God, nor in angels, nor in the glorified, nor in the Church of Christ, nor in the family of man. Existence without love would be as dead a thing as a tree without roots; upon such a tree the summer's sun might shine in all his fullness and power, but there would be seen neither foliage nor fruit. So upon the heart without love there may shine the sun of prosperity, but that heart will put forth no signs of real life. Look at the man that has no love to God, nor to his fellows; he may increase in riches, he may have all that heart can wish, he may fare sumptuously every day, and boast that he has need of nothing. But has he life, real life? Is he happy? Ask him, and he will tell you he knows not what it is to be happy. He has existence, but not life; he is "dead while he liveth." As then love is the very essence of life, life temporal and life eternal, the gift next to the gift of Christ is a heart to know the Lord, *i.e.*, a heart to love the Lord; and the heart which loves the Lord loves all that is noble, all that is holy, all that is glorious in heaven above, or on the earth beneath, and thus possesses the very element of life—eternal life. Let then those to whom this heart to

know the Lord has been given, rejoice and be glad, possessing as they do a boon of incomparable worth a pearl of great price, a very fountain of present delight and future bliss. From the altar of their hearts there should go up the incense of praise, the outbursts of adoring gratitude; and the sacred resolve of each should be—"Every day will I bless thee, and I will praise thy name for ever and ever."

THE FALL OF BABYLON.

JER. xxv. 13: "And I will bring upon that land all my words which I have pronounced against it."

THE fall of Babylon, and its subsequent desolations, are striking proofs of the truth of prophecy; and the truth of prophecy stamps with Divine inspiration the prophets and their prophecies; for it were absurd to suppose that man could foresee and foretell the events of future ages, when such is his ignorance of the future that he "knows not what a day may bring forth." When, therefore, Isaiah and Jeremiah predicted what ages would bring forth in relation to great cities and mighty empires, the only rational conclusion is, that they must have written under Divine inspiration—the inspiration of Him who knows the future as well as the past, and who sees the end from the beginning. To deny Divine inspiration in the case of prophecies which have been literally fulfilled, is to give divinity to man and to make Paul a liar, for the Apostle declares, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God;" and if the sceptic deems it irrational to believe in Divine inspiration, we think it far more irrational not to believe, seeing that the denial of Divine inspiration in the case of prophecies gives to man an attribute he never possessed, namely, that

of knowing the fate of cities and the destiny of nations, and that, too, at a time when there was no appearance of any such fate or destiny awaiting them. Prophecies, then, being the utterances of the Divine mind, and the decisions of the Divine will, God says, "I will bring upon that land all my words which I have pronounced against it." That is to say, I will fulfil every prediction which I have made by the mouth of My servants the prophets.

Let us now see how fully this declaration was carried out. God had pronounced many things against Babylon, and the land thereof, and all that He had declared came to pass; *e.g.*, God had pronounced the destruction of Babylon by the Medes and Persians. Isaiah (xxi. 2) writes, "Go up, O Elam," that is Persia; "besiege, O Media." And Jeremiah (li. 11) says, "The Lord hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes: for his device is against Babylon, to destroy it." This united prophecy by Isaiah and Jeremiah was fulfilled; for in the course of time Babylon was besieged by the united forces of the Medes and Persians, under the command of Cyrus, who was the predicted conqueror of Babylon a hundred years before he was born.

Moreover, God had said that the river of Babylon should be dried up. This river was two furlongs broad, and more than twelve feet deep, and was thought to be a better fortification of the city than its high and massy walls. In Isaiah xliv. 27, God says of Babylon, "I will dry up thy rivers;" and

Jeremiah (l. 38) writes, "A drought is upon her waters, and they shall be dried up." This prophecy was strikingly fulfilled; for Cyrus turned the course of the river Euphrates, and so drained the waters that the river became easily fordable for his soldiers to cross and enter the city, and, by this means Babylon was taken.

God had also said that Babylon should be "a possession for the bittern, and pools of water;" that she should become a desolation among the nations; and so complete was to be the desolation, that the Arabian would not be able to pitch his tent there, nor the shepherds to make their fold there. (*Vide* Isaiah xiii. 20.) All this came to pass. One part of the country was overflowed by the river being turned out of its course, and thence became boggy and marshy; and so overrun was the country round about with serpents, scorpions, and all sorts of venomous and unclean creatures, that no person could live there. The Arab could not pitch his tent there, and the shepherd could not make his fold there; and thus was fulfilled the prophecy, "I will sweep it with the besom of destruction," and Babylon was swept clean off from the face of the earth. Now when we compare prophecy with history, the predictions of ancient seers with the testimony of modern travellers, it is impossible not to see how, in every particular, all that was predicted has been fulfilled, and how God has, in very deed, brought upon that land all the words which He had pronounced against it.

When God pronounces against a city or a nation,

and determines its fall, the decision is not arbitrary; it is founded on some foreseen fact. God foresaw the idolatry, the iniquity, the pride of Babylon, and seeing this, He determined its destruction. Thus the fall of Babylon was the result, not of an arbitrary purpose, but of a purpose founded on the foreseen wickedness of the city and the empire. "Behold," says God, "I will punish the King of Babylon and his land, as I have punished the King of Assyria;" and the fall of Babylon and its utter extinction was the punishment threatened. Sin, then, was the cause of Babylon's fall. Sin saps the foundations of cities and empires, and when the foundation is sapped the fall is inevitable.

When God, because of iniquity, determines the destruction of a city or an empire, nothing can save it from falling. If ever a city appeared impregnable, it was Babylon. The height of its walls was prodigious. One writer says "they were above three hundred feet high, eighty-seven feet broad, and forty-eight miles in compass." Then, in addition to this wonderful wall, there was the river Euphrates, which appeared to be an insuperable barrier to an enemy entering the city. But, notwithstanding its mighty wall with its hundred gates of solid brass, notwithstanding its wide and deep river, Babylon was taken, according to the word of the Lord. Impregnable as appeared the city, it fell, and with its fall passed away its pomp and splendour, to be seen no more. Men talk of impregnability—the impregnability of walls, forts, and bulwarks. The fact is, nothing is impregnable but what God defends;

and nothing can stand which God determines shall fall. Babylon, Nineveh, Tyre and Sidon, are all illustrations of the truth of prophecy, and the power of God to fulfil all His counsel, and to accomplish all His designs. "Hath He said, and shall He not do it?" "Hath He spoken, and shall it not come to pass?"

The fidelity of God, in the execution of His threatened judgments, is a presumptive proof that He will fulfil all His gracious promises. Faithful to His threatenings, will He not be faithful to His promises? Has he more delight in punishing the wicked than in blessing the righteous? Nay, verily. "He is *slow* to anger," but "He is *not slack* concerning his promises;" a proof this that He is more ready to fulfil a promise than to carry out a threat. When, therefore, God says, "I will bring upon that land all my words which I have pronounced against it," we may feel assured He will bring to pass every jot and tittle of all those great and precious promises which He has made to His people. All the threatenings of God are yea; "all the promises of God are yea and amen." God asserts His own fidelity in the strongest terms possible, and says, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away;" a declaration which makes certain the doom of the wicked, and the salvation of the righteous.

There are cases in which Divine threatenings have not been carried out, but there are no cases in which Divine promises have not been fulfilled. The reason why certain threatenings have not been executed is, that the sins and iniquities which called

forth those threatenings have been repented of, and the parties threatened have deeply humbled themselves before God. "God doth not afflict willingly." He does not use the lance, if the wound will discharge its corrupt matter and heal without it. He does not cut down the tree, if after years of fruitlessness there is promise of fruit another year. He bears long with the rebellious. "Forty years long was He grieved with that generation" which He had brought up out of the land of Egypt and the house of bondage, and not until the expiration of that long period did He swear in His wrath, "They shall not enter into my rest." There never was a people which had not reason to say, "The Lord is long-suffering to us ward." But when a people, like the Babylonians, "despise the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and longsuffering," then the decree goes forth, "I will bring upon that land, or that people, all my words which I have pronounced against it."

Should it be asked, And may not promises fail of being accomplished, seeing that threatenings are not always carried out? we reply, Threatenings and promises spring from two very different emotions in the Divine breast. Threatenings spring from anger—anger against sin. Promises spring from love—the love of God to man in Christ Jesus. Threatenings, as we have seen, may not be carried out, because, as they spring from anger, anger may cease, and does cease when the sins which called it forth are repented of and forsaken. "He keepeth not his anger for ever." "O Lord, I will praise thee, for though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned

away, and thou comfortest me." But as promises spring from love, they can never fail of being accomplished, because "He rests in his love." If God could cease to love, even as He can cease to be angry, then promises as well as threatenings might not be fulfilled. But as love never faileth, so the promises which spring therefrom can never fail. Many a human promise made in love has failed, because the love that prompted it has failed. All the promises of God are made in love, and because His love knows not the shadow of change, not one good thing of all that He has promised can fail of realization.

Trust, then, in the promises. Rely upon the promises. "Firm as the earth His promise stands;" and firmer, too, for the earth shall be dissolved, and all that therein is shall be burnt up, but every promise of our God shall stand for ever; and, as generations past have testified, so generations to come shall testify to the fact, that "God is faithful," and to the very letter has fulfilled every jot and tittle of all that He in the depths of His love had promised to the children of men. Promises may be delayed, and now and then they may appear to be on the very eve of frustration; but fail they cannot. Divine love and Divine faithfulness are guarantees, that what He has promised He will assuredly perform.

FALSE TEACHING.

JER. xxvii. 10: "They prophesy a lie unto you."

WHAT is a lie? And what is truth? A lie is a declaration contrary to facts, or a statement opposed to infallible testimony. Everything is a fact which has the testimony of the senses. The five senses, when perfect, are infallible tests of physical truths; so that everything is a truth which has the testimony of the senses, and everything is a lie which contradicts the senses.

The dogma of Transubstantiation we hold to be a lie, because it contradicts the senses—the senses testifying, as they do, that bread *is* bread, and wine *is* wine, and nothing more, whether they be put upon a common table for common uses, or placed upon a sacred altar for a sacred purpose. To believe in Transubstantiation I must disbelieve the testimony of my senses. If Transubstantiation be a truth, then my senses are a lie—they deceive me. If, however, my senses are true, and they do not deceive me, then Transubstantiation is a lie. Both cannot be true, and we leave it to candid and unprejudiced minds to decide which is true, the dogma of the Roman Catholic Church, or the five senses.

When Christ performed an act of transubstantiation, and turned water into wine, the two senses

of sight and taste testified to the reality of the miracle; but when a priest of the Romish Church professedly performs an act of transubstantiation, the same two senses testify that no change whatever has been wrought, either in the bread or the wine. The reason we believe in the turning of water into wine at the marriage of Cana in Galilee is, that it had the testimony of the senses. The reason we do not believe in the turning of consecrated bread and wine into flesh and blood is, that it contradicts the senses. The same two senses of sight and taste, which declared the miracle of Christ to be a reality, declare the dogma of the Romish Church to be a delusion, a lie.

Now as that is a lie which contradicts the senses, so also is that which is opposed to infallible testimony—the testimony of Him who is not a man that He should lie, nor a man that He should err. Now God, in the Holy Scriptures, testifies to the fall of man; the deity of Christ, and the vicarious character of His death; redemption through His blood; regeneration by the Holy Spirit; the resurrection of the dead; a final judgment; the everlasting punishment of the wicked, and the eternal happiness of the righteous.

These Divine testimonies have been called in question, and in this our day there are many who deny them *in toto*. One tells us, man is not a fallen creature; that the fall of man is fable, and not fact; that he is just what God made him. Another declares that Christ was not Divine, but simply human; also that His death was not vicarious, and

that His blood possesses no saving efficacy. A third says, that as man is not a fallen being, he needs no regeneration, but only the cultivation of his mental and moral powers. A fourth teaches that the resurrection of the dead, a final judgment, and the everlasting punishment of the wicked, are dogmas not to be credited. Now when men thus teach and preach theories and doctrines which are directly opposed to Divine testimony, we say to all lovers of truth, believe them *not*. "They prophesy a lie unto you."

John's advice to beloved brethren was never more needful than now. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world." Try the spirits; bring them to the law and the testimony. If the theories held, and the doctrines proclaimed, agree with Divine testimony, they are true; if not, they are a lie. Now lies are dangerous things; but there are none so fearful in their consequences as those which contradict the word of God. Other lies may endanger man's temporal interests and welfare; but these, his eternal. They are poison with false labels; you are told they will do you good, you take them, and they are fatal to the soul. They are false flags or colours; you heed them, you are lured by them, and you fall into the hands of the enemy. They are false finger-posts; upon them you see written, "The way to heaven;" but the road to which they point leads down to hell. They who prophesy lies are soul murderers, and are more to be dreaded than the

assassin lurking in secret places. Eternity alone will reveal the number of souls first betrayed, and then destroyed, by those who prophesy lies in the name of the Lord.

Shall we be told that some of these false prophets are amiable, kind, and beneficent men? Our reply is, "Satan can transform himself into an angel of light." It is, therefore, no marvel that false apostles can transform themselves into the apostles of Christ. Satan is no less Satan, and the great power of darkness, because he transforms himself into an angel of light; and false prophets are no less the betrayers and murderers of souls, because they appear lovely in their spirit and amiable in their deportment. Men are benefactors, or malefactors, not according to the guise they wear, but according to the good or the evil which they do in the world. The greatest benefactor is he who does the greatest and the most lasting good; and the greatest malefactor is he who does the greatest and the most lasting evil. In the first class of the world's benefactors we place the ministers of the Cross of Christ—the preachers of "the truth as it is in Jesus," who are God's instruments of saving souls. And in the lowest class of the world's malefactors we place the prophets of lies, who are Satan's confederates for the deception and destruction of souls.

There is no good in the world comparable to that of saving souls; and there is no evil in the world equal to that of destroying souls. To save a soul is the highest gain, and therefore the highest good. To lose a soul is the greatest loss, and therefore the

greatest evil. To gain the world and to lose the soul would be profitless—worse than profitless; it would be ruin, utter and complete. Seeing, then, that the issues of truth and error are so momentous, let prayer be made to God continually that He would be pleased, in His great mercy, to multiply the preachers of truth, and silence for ever the prophets of error, who prophesy lies in His name. O Thou God of Truth, Thou Fountain of Light! take away all false prophets, all blind leaders of the blind, and send forth into Thy Church men who know the truth, love the truth, and whose delight it shall be to preach the truth, that so souls may be saved and Thy name glorified.

A DEATH SENTENCE.

JER. xxviii. 16: "This year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the Lord."

LIFE and death are in the hand of God. No man can insure his life a single year, nor a single day. If God says to a man, "This year thou shalt die," die he must. No earthly power can save him. God determines the year in which some men shall die, and knows the year in which every man will die. He knows it, because He knows the causes—physical, mental, moral, criminal, and accidental—which lead to death. He knows every physical disease, and how long it will last before it issues in death. He is acquainted with every mental disease, and knows how long it will continue before it ends fatally. He knows all the moral emotions, and sees how such emotions as sorrow and anguish will, after a while, terminate in a collapse of life. He sees all the criminal courses which men pursue, and knows the year and the day in which they will bring them down to the gates of death. He knows all the accidents which will occur on land and sea, and all the cases in which they will prove fatal, or otherwise, to those whom they overtake; while in the case of Hananiah, He *fixed* and *determined* the year of his death, on account of transgression. "*This*

year thou shalt die," not because of disease, physical or mental; not because of a broken heart—sorrow rending every fibre of that heart; not because of some accident which will befall you; but "because thou hast taught rebellion against the Lord."

We thus see that rebellion may shorten the life of a man. The wicked, through his wickedness and excesses, may not live out half his days; while death in other cases can only be traced to the operation of natural causes, or to the sovereignty of the Divine will. There are cases of mortality which can only be resolved into Divine sovereignty. It is not possible to see the cause of some good men's removal to the better land. All we can say is, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight." God, no doubt, determines, according to the counsel of His own will, the year in which every Hananiah shall die, because of his rebellion; but as a general rule, He does not make known the year to the guilty party. He does not say, *Thou shalt die this year*, or the *next*, or the year following. He hides the time from man, and comes in most cases as a thief in the night.

When God does say to a wicked man, "*This year thou shalt die,*" it is a sentence pronounced in judicial anger to be executed; but when He says the same thing to a good man, it is a message of love, an intimation that this year the Father will come to take him home. The death of a sinner is condemnation: the death of a saint is salvation. Death ushers the sinner into perdition, but translates the saint to heaven. "The rich man died, and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment." Lazarus

died, and was seen in Abraham's bosom. Death fixes the destiny of the spirit, and the destiny of the spirit is determined by the life lived in the flesh. If the life lived in the flesh be a life of sin, then the destiny of the spirit will be that of woe; but if the life lived in the flesh be a life of faith, then the destiny of the spirit will be that of bliss. As is the life, so will be the destiny. "God will render to every man according to his work."

Now, as life thus determines destiny, and as no man knows in what year he will die, we have here a motive and an incentive to live holily, righteously, and godly, in this present evil world; in other words, to live a life of faith on the Son of God—a life which never fails to secure holiness here and happiness hereafter. Let us, then, seek to live this life; and then if a message should come to us through the medium of disease, or some unexpected calamity, saying, "This year thou shalt die," we shall receive such message with joy, rather than sorrow, and calmly bowing our heads, shall say, "Amen, even so, Father." To live has been Christ; to die will be gain. If this year I must die, I shall gain a better country than that I leave, a better house than that I quit, a better church than that from which I get my dismissal. Death to the believer is *gain*, everlasting *gain*! Death to the sinner is *loss*, everlasting *loss*!

EFFORT AND PRAYER.

JER. xxix. 7: "Seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it; for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace."

EFFORT and prayer. Prayer and effort are the ordained means for the accomplishment of objects, sacred in their character, and important in their results. What a sacred thing is peace! From eternity God dwelt in His own uncreated temple of peace. Before He began the work of creation, there could be nothing to disturb the peace of His sacred abode, nor perhaps was the peace disturbed until ages had rolled away after the work of creation began.

We know not at what period after the beginning of the creation a revolt took place among the angels, whether in the infancy of their being, or at a later period of their existence. We know not the age of these first sinners at the time of their revolt; all we know is, that they did revolt; they rebelled against God, and for their rebellion were cast out of heaven, placed under arrest, and, according to St. Jude, are "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day."

The rebels expelled, peace again reigned in heaven. The unfallen ones who kept their first

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Individual effort, however, will often fail to secure
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estate, dwell in perfect peace ; they have peace within and without ; they have no flesh warring against the spirit, and spirit against the flesh ; and they have no invader breaking the peace of their holy habitation. Peace is their home ; they live in peace, and the God of love and peace is with them.

Peace is so sacred and priceless a thing, that when it was driven out of our world by the demon of iniquity, the Lord Jesus came into the world in order to bring it back again, that it might again become the heritage of man ; and before He left the world to go to the Father, " He made peace by the blood of His cross," and bequeathed the precious boon to His disciples, saying, " Peace I leave you, my peace I give unto you." Surely, then, no effort should be wanting on our part to secure and perpetuate this great blessing. Citizens should seek the peace of the city ; heads of families should seek the peace of their families ; pastors should seek the peace of their churches ; Christians of every name should " seek peace and pursue it ;" and when they do so, the Prince of Peace approvingly says, " Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God."

Individual effort, however, will often fail to secure this priceless blessing. Despite our best endeavours to retain it, it will sometimes take its flight from the city, the family, or the church. The great Apostle felt the almost impossibility, in some cases, of keeping and maintaining peace, and says, " If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men ;" showing that the preservation of peace may,

at times, be beyond the reach of human possibility. Some men have so much of the wild beast of the forest in their nature, that it is as impossible to live in peace with them, as it would be for the lamb to dwell in peace with the lion, or the kid to abide in harmony with the leopard. This difficulty of preserving peace in the midst of angry natures, and unreasonable men, compels all lovers of peace to betake themselves to prayer, to the end that Omnipotence may be enlisted on their behalf to secure, and preserve, this much desired blessing. God would have both effort put forth, and prayer offered, for the blessing in question. "*Seek* the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and *pray* unto the Lord for it."

This union of effort and prayer should not only be employed in relation to peace, but in relation to every other blessing. Success in business is a blessing, and this should be sought by diligence and prayer. "Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." . The spread of the Gospel is a blessing; its influence, direct and indirect; on society and the world, is eminently beneficial. It is only from the Gospel that righteousness flows—that righteousness which exalts a nation, raises it out of the dust of idolatry, and cruelty, and sets it on high; and the duty of the Church is to *seek* the spread of the Gospel, and to *pray* unto the Lord for it. This is what our missionary societies have done—they have blended effort with prayer; and the success of this twofold agency has been such as to encourage the hearts of good men, and to put to silence the ignorance of

foolish men. The salvation of souls is a blessing—a blessing the full value of which eternity alone will reveal; here again there should be effort blended with prayer. If we interpret the mind and will of God rightly, He says to us who are His, “Seek ye the salvation of souls, and pray unto the Lord for it;” “Go, preach the Gospel to every creature;” and “Pray without ceasing,” “that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified.”

This combination of personal effort with fervent prayer, shows the impotency of means, apart from the power of God. If there were a natural potency in means to secure the desired and needed blessings, we see not what need there could be for prayer. Prayer is a confession of human weakness, and a recognition of the fact, that “Power belongeth unto God.” There is a good deal of flippant talk about the force of truth, the might of argument, and the power of eloquence. We confess that in the region of politics, truth has a force, argument has a might, and eloquence has a power; but in the region of the Gospel these things have no force, might, or power, to secure the end aimed at, apart from Divine influence. The Gospel, when it comes in word only, leaves the sinner as dead in trespasses and sins as it found him; but when it comes accompanied by Divine influence, he is quickened into life, and “the life which he henceforth lives in the flesh, he lives by faith upon the Son of God, who loved him, and gave Himself for him.”

If we are asked to explain *how* Divine influence blends with human effort in securing the blessings

of peace, the spread of the Gospel, and the salvation of souls, we confess our inability to answer the question. That there is a connection is obvious, both from the fact that God has commanded that effort be made, and that prayer be offered, and also from the fact that effort and prayer have never failed of success; but the "*modus operandi*," the mode of operation, we cannot explain. Divine influence in connection with human effort, is as mysterious as the wind which blows. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and we hear the sound thereof; but we cannot tell from whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth." So with regard to Divine influence, which like some heavenly wind, blows on the sons of flesh—

" New models all the carnal mind,
And forms the man afresh"—

We cannot understand it; it is a mystery too deep for the plummet of reason to fathom—too high for the wings of the human intellect to reach.

Let us, then, take the fact as it stands; and without vainly attempting to solve the mystery, let us work and pray—pray and work. Seek peace, and pray for it; seek the spread of the Gospel, and pray for it; seek the salvation of souls, and pray for it, for "this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning us." It has been said that "effort without prayer is atheism, and prayer without effort is fanaticism." There is some truth in this. But the blending of the two is scriptural, and because scriptural, it has never failed to be suc-

We may also add, that by effort and man is honoured and God is glorified. Man is glorified, in that he becomes a co-worker with God and God is glorified, in that the excellency of His power is confessed to be of Him, and not of man. How kind and condescending of God, to allow man to be a worker with Him in the carrying out His great and grand designs of love and mercy! For such kindness and condescension let us thank God, take courage, and be "always abounding in the work of the Lord."

HEALING MEDICINES.

JER. xxx. 13: "Thou hast no healing medicines."

DOCTORS abound—doctors who undertake the cure of souls. Some of these doctors have learning; they are apt scholars, they can read with ease the classics, and are well up in all the higher branches of education. Others have talents of a high order; they can discuss with philosophical acumen the most abstruse questions of the day, and can carry on an argument, logical both in its premises and conclusions. By reason of their learning they may occupy high positions in the Church, and sit in high places in the State; and by reason of their great talents they may draw together large and admiring audiences; but they cure not the maladies, the deep-seated maladies of the soul, because they have "no healing medicines," and without these they can effect no cures. To all these learned doctors we may apply the language of Job, who, to a class of men in his day, said, "Ye are all physicians of no value."

There are, then, healing medicines—medicines adapted to heal all the maladies of a sin-stricken soul; but unless a man has them, and applies them, he is of no more use to the patients under his care than if he were a ploughman or a vine-dresser. Is it asked, And what are the medicines which heal

diseases of the mind, and give health and tone to the soul? We reply, They are those which God has provided, and which are to be found in Christ. In Christ are wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; and these applied to the soul, heal it of whatsoever disease it has, restore it to spiritual soundness, and give to it nothing less than life and immortality. Never were medicines like these. All other remedies of man's devising are altogether ineffectual; they fail to remove the maladies of the soul, and to restore it to spiritual health and soundness.

The truths of the Gospel being the only restorative truths, the only truths which can restore health and vigour to the soul, it follows that to every other preacher than the preacher of the glorious Gospel of the blessed God we may apply the words of the prophet, and say, "Thou hast no healing medicines." Thou canst not cure a single soul; under your treatment the soul will remain uncured, and will ultimately die in all its wounds and bruises, and putrifying sores, while its death will be required at your hands, for the non-application of those healing medicines which God has commanded to be used and made known to every child of man. In the contemplation of a result so fearful, well might the Apostle Paul exclaim, "Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel!"

It may here be observed, that the priests and ministers of the sanctuary who have no healing medicines, the physicians which are of no value, often flatter themselves that they have effected the cure of

souls, when they have done nothing of the kind; and this delusion they palm upon their poor patients. Hence, after the administration of their worse than useless medicines, they cry, "Health, health," when there is no health; "A cure, a cure," when there is no cure. God looks with anger upon the delusion practised, and cries, "They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace." And who are these physicians of no value, who have no healing medicines, who plaster over the wound, and call it a cure? They are those who lead silly men and women to the confessional, and then, and there, pronounce their sins forgiven; they are those who assure the baptised that in baptism they were made "children of God and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven;" they are those who administer the Lord's Supper to a dying man as the sure means of making his peace with God; they are those who tell men that by deeds of law, or by works of righteousness, they can be saved. These are the men who, instead of curing souls, deceive them; who, instead of healing their wounds, apply their narcotic drugs, by which pain and anguish of soul are assuaged, but which leave the soul as full of deadly disease as before. It is one thing to take away pain; it is quite another thing to remove disease, or to heal a wound. We have seen, in a London hospital, a patient made insensible to pain, and yet the subject of a direful malady. Even so are there to be seen multitudes of ungodly men who have not the slightest pain or anguish of soul, and yet they are

the subjects of a moral malady which must prove fatal to the soul, unless, by the application of Gospel remedies, it be removed. The absence of pain in a body physically diseased is a bad sign. The absence of sorrow in a soul morally diseased is equally so. In both cases the signs are such as lead to no hope of recovery. Let pain be felt in the diseased body, and there is hope of recovery; let sorrow be felt in the diseased soul, and there is hope of salvation.

On no other principle than this, can we account for the joy of angels over penitent sinners. In the sorrow of the penitent which they witness, they see the sign of returning life, and can cherish a hope of his salvation; hence, the penitents' tears are their joy, the penitents' sorrow their song, the penitents' pain their pleasure. Yes; there are pains which issue in pleasure, and there are pleasures which issue in pain. The pain which extorts the cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner," leads to "fulness of joy, and pleasures which are for evermore." The pleasure which excites the laugh of the godless, leads to weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." "Go to, now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you." For mourners of sin there are healing medicines, which can give them health, and joy, and peace. For lovers of pleasure there is nothing which can give perpetuity to their joy, or prevent their sinful delights issuing in a night of outer darkness. When the sorrows of death compass the godless man, and the pains of hell get hold upon him, he

can get no relief. Does a companion of his godless life visit him ? he can administer to him no comfort. Is he visited by a priest of the so-called infallible church, and does he pronounce over him the absolution of his sins ? it is a delusion, his sins are not forgiven, and his soul is not at rest. Do his family gather around his dying bed, and do they try to alleviate the anguish of his soul by reminding him of his good deeds, despite his gay and godless life ? it is all in vain ; he gets no solid peace, no real ease to his pain, and troubled conscience. And why is this ? How is it that the companion of his godless life can afford him no relief ? How is it that the priest can give him no real rest ? How is it that his family can give him no solid peace ? To each of these miserable comforters, we may apply the words of the prophet, and say, "Thou hast no healing medicines." "There *is* a balm for every wound, a cordial for every fear," but you have not got them, and without these healing medicines, which the Gospel of Christ supplies, the sinner must die, die in his sins, and perish in his iniquity. We affirm, without the fear of contradiction, that the Gospel is the *only* remedy which can heal the wounds, and make whole the soul of man ; a remedy which is not human, but Divine. Man never discovered it, and never would.

"This remedy did *Wisdom* find,
To heal diseases of the mind ;
This sovereign balm, whose virtues can
Restore the ruined creature, man."

EVERLASTING LOVE.

JER. xxxi. 3: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee."

THE everlasting love of God is a mystery, a mystery which no finite mind can fathom. Under it the mind staggers, and confesses its inability to grasp the fact. We can no more comprehend the everlasting love of God, than we can understand the everlasting God. "None by searching can find Him out." "No man knoweth the Father, but the Son, and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father." Equals can understand equals. The fact that Christ knows the Father, shows the equality of Christ to the Father—that "He and His Father are one"—one in nature, one in essence. In consequence of this equality, it is required that "all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father; he that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father." Can language be more explicit, and more expressive of the divinity of Christ? Can words testify more clearly that Christ was "God manifest in the flesh"?

But the subject of this meditation is not the divinity of Christ, but the everlasting love of the Father. This everlasting love of God was sovereign in its character, costly in its manifestation, and is

glorious in its results. Sovereign in its character, in that it did not embrace all the creatures of guilt and misery which had revolted and fallen into sin; it did not embrace the fallen angels. For reasons known only to Himself, God left those fallen ones to reap the reward of their iniquity, without any manifestation of His pity and compassion. Very different was His conduct towards us. "In His love and in His pity He redeemed us," and redeeming us as He did, not with corruptible things, but with the precious blood of Christ, illustrates the costliness of its manifestation, while the results of this redemption are truly glorious, being nothing less than the conversion, justification, and glorification of the immortal soul.

The sovereignty of God's everlasting love is also to be seen in the fact, that all men are not drawn to Him, nor justified by Him, nor sanctified through Him, nor glorified with Him, but only those whom He foreknew. *Vide* Romans viii. 29, 30. The idea that God, having the whole of the human race present before His eternal mind, loved the whole with the same everlasting love, is contradicted by the fact we have just stated. *Like* causes produce *like* results. If, therefore, God loved the *whole* of the race, with the same everlasting love, as He loved *some* of the race, we see not why the *whole* are not drawn to Him. On the hypothesis that God loved all alike, we have cause *without* effect in some cases, and cause *with* effect in other cases. In some cases the everlasting love of God is followed by a blessed result. "Therefore with lovingkind-

ness have I drawn thee." In other cases this everlasting love, supposing it to exist, is followed by no result whatever. Now, where there is no effect, there is no cause; and as we see no effects of everlasting love in those who are not drawn to God, we conclude the cause could not exist—that is to say, God did not love with the *same* everlasting love those who die in their sins, *undrawn* to Him, as He did those who die in Jesus, *drawn* to Him by the cords of His love. Otherwise the same causes do not produce the same results; or, what is more strange still, the same cause issues in blessed results in some cases, and in other cases in no results at all. In order, therefore, to be both reasonable and scriptural, we must admit, that the everlasting love of God has been sovereignly exercised, and embraces those, and only those, who are drawn to Him, justified, sanctified, and ultimately glorified.

Should it be asked, why God should love with an everlasting love, a portion of the human race, and not the whole, when all were alike guilty and under the law? we confess we cannot tell. We know the fact, but we know not the reason thereof. There are numerous facts, facts patent to every eye, but the reasons of which nobody can understand. "Two men shall be in the field, the one shall be taken, and the other left." "Two women shall be grinding at the mill, the one shall be taken, and the other left." Two children shall be born, the one shall die, and the other live. Two malefactors shall perish, the one shall cry for mercy, the other shall die in his sins. Two ungodly men shall enter a sanctuary, the

one shall become converted, the other shall remain a hardened sinner. These are only samples of a multitude of facts, which everybody sees, but which nobody understands. God is His own interpreter of His own acts and deeds, and in due time He will make plain those acts of His, which human reason now fails to comprehend.

But while we know not the reason why the everlasting love of God should issue in the conversion and salvation of an untold number of the human race, and not in the conversion and salvation of the whole of the race, yet we know there must be a reason, inasmuch as the all-wise God never acts without a reason. He is no capricious, arbitrary Ruler of the universe. Wisdom guides Him in all the decisions of His eternal mind. Gazing upon the works of His hands, we exclaim, "In wisdom hast thou made them all." So when we contemplate the range and extent of His love, excluding as it does the whole of the fallen angels, and embracing as it does only a portion of fallen men, we are constrained to confess, "Just and true are Thy ways, O King of saints." *Just*, however unable we may be to see the justice. *True*, however incapable we may be to see the truth. A great man may do many things, the justice and truth of which a child may not be able to see, but which are, nevertheless, *just* and *true*. Even so, the great God has done many things which we who are but children, in the boyhood of our being, cannot understand, but which are nevertheless the results of consummate wisdom, a wisdom which never errs, and which does all things well. While, therefore,

we cannot give the reason why the everlasting love of God in its saving issues should be limited in its range, and why it should embrace the objects it does, yet we know that a reason does exist for *this*, and for *every act* of His infinite and infallible mind. The wisdom of God is a hidden wisdom, hidden perhaps until the dawn of immortality, when it shall burst upon us in all its effulgence, revealing to us the secrets of His will, and the reasons of His eternal purpose in relation to the children of men. Whatever darkness may surround this, and other subjects of anxious inquiry, we have only to wait; assured as we are that "what we know not now we shall know hereafter;" that what we cannot now understand in the childhood and youth of our being, we shall clearly comprehend when we reach heaven, and attain to perfect manhood, to the full stature of men in Christ Jesus.

THE FUTURE OF BELIEVERS.

JER. xxxi. 12: "And their soul shall be as a watered garden ;
and they shall not sorrow any more at all."

THERE is a glorious future for Israel after the flesh, and there is a more glorious future for Israel after the spirit, the true Israel of God. Of the former it is predicted that "They shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock, and the herd : and their soul shall be as a watered garden, and they shall not sorrow any more at all." Predictions respecting the latter are of a more spiritual kind, and point to better blessings than wheat, and wine, and oil, and the young of the flock and the herd ; so that an infinitely more glorious future awaits the Christian than the Jew, the Israel of the spiritual type, and not of the carnal.

This brings us to the question we have now to consider, namely, What is the future of believers, the true Israel of God ? We look into the word of God, and there we learn that their future is, *first*, one of sinless perfection. Scripture testifies and declares that they are to be made like unto the Son of God. Like Him in His glorified humanity, for their vile bodies are to be changed and fashioned like unto

His own glorious body. Like Him in the loveliness of His moral character, which was the perfection of beauty, without spot or blemish. Thus perfection awaits them. They are not yet already perfect, but they will be—perfect in holiness, perfect in love, and in every attribute of their being.

This state of sinless perfection has been strikingly set forth in type and figure. What is “the king’s daughter, all glorious within, with her clothing of wrought gold, and her raiment of needlework,” but a beautiful figure of perfected humanity? What was the vision which John had of the redeemed in heaven, clothed in white robes, but a scenic representation of the sinless perfection of the glorified? What are the stars, shining in all their brightness and beauty, but faint shadows of the saints, who are to shine as stars for ever and ever in the kingdom of their Father? Thus imagery, the most beautiful, points to the future of the saints, as a state of sinless perfection.

Need we say that to this end Christ died, and rose, and passed into the heavens, that He might present His saints *faultless* before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. Forward to this perfection of character all good men have been looking as the consummation of their highest wishes and their most ardent desires. David thirsted for it, and said, “I shall be satisfied when I awake up in thy likeness.” The whole church of God earnestly desires it, and in anticipation thereof, sings—

“There we shall see His face,
And *never, never* sin.”

And many a saint has longed to be delivered from this body of sin and death, this bondage of corruption, that he might rise into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Those who are still longing for this deliverance have only to wait awhile, and every bond of corruption shall be broken; they shall be free, and in their freedom they shall pass into the heavens, crowned with honour and glory, to be for ever perfect, and for ever present with their Lord—

“Where all is incorruptible and pure:
The joy without the pain, the smile without the tear.”

The future of believers, the true Israel of God, is also one of boundless resources. “They shall hunger no more, and thirst no more.” Their resources shall be more than equal to their every want. Every thought, desire, and instinct of their celestial being shall be satisfied. “There shall be no more pain,” because the tide of health will never cease to flow through their whole nature. “Sorrow and sighing shall for ever flee away;” they can have no place in heaven. “There shall be no more death.” Christ is their life, and because He lives, they shall live also.

Here, in this our fallen world, believers both hunger and thirst. Many a thought is unsatisfied; many a desire unrealised; many a spiritual instinct ungratified; and that because their resources are limited. Here they suffer pain, because the tide of health is low, and does not flow through their whole

nature. Here they sigh and sorrow, because their joy is not deep enough to drown the sighs of the heart, and the sorrows of the mind. Here they must die, because the body has no unfailing spring of life. Mark the contrast between the present and the future of the Israel of God, and rejoice that while the present is a state of limited means of supply, the future is one of boundless, inexhaustible resources.

As the future of believers is often spoken of as a state of rest, let it not be supposed that that future will be one everlasting state of inactivity, and that eternity will be spent in luxurious ease, doing nothing. We believe that the future will be one of holy, unceasing activity; that no power will be dormant; that life will never sleep, never slumber. We shall serve Him "day and night in His temple;" that temple which is as large as the universe. Here arises a question, What will be the engagements and services of the next world to call forth the holy and unceasing activities of the soul? We shall have no Gospel to preach to sinners, no ignorance to remove by education, no sick to visit, no poor to care for, no churches and chapels to build, and then to pay for. And yet, in the absence of all these duties which now call for the activities of the soul, we shall not be idle. Idle! No! God will see to it, that

" Every power find sweet employ
In that eternal world of joy! "

There is the power of thought—that will find sweet

employ; we shall think of the *past*, the rock from whence we were hewn, the pit from which we were digged, the curse from which we were redeemed, the power of darkness from which we were translated. Then we shall think of the *present*, the thousand glories which will then be revealed. Then we shall think of the *future*, of what that great future will unfold and reveal. Thus there will be plenty of work for the power of thought. Then there is the power of adoration, and that shall find sweet employ in everlasting ascriptions of praise, and honour, and glory, unto God and the Lamb. Then there is the power of investigation and inquiry, and that will find sweet employ in researches into the thousand times ten thousand things which are now hidden from our view. Then there is the power of love, and that will find sweet employ in that every glorified one, from the least in the kingdom of heaven to the greatest, will be an object of love, while God in Christ will command our supreme affection. Thus every power of the soul will be occupied, making the future of believers one of holy, unceasing activity. They shall wait upon the Lord. Like the angels which excel in strength, they shall "do His commandments, hearkening to the voice of His word;" and whatever duties they may have to discharge, or whatever mission they may have to perform, it will involve no toil, and be followed by no exhaustion. "They shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."

The future of believers is one of vast possessions.

This is the climax of their inheritance. The relation in which they stand to God is the filial; they are children of God, hence, "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ;" but they are yet in their minority, and as a minor does not enter upon the estates to which he is heir until he comes of age, even so is it with believers—they are minors until their death. Death is the period when they attain to full manhood; and when no longer minors they pass into the heavens, and take possession of the inheritance to which they are heirs. But the *whole* of their estate will not be in their hands until the end of the world. At the end of the world they will come into full possession of all, to which, by reason of sonship, they are entitled; an inheritance declared to be "incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." They will then have an incorruptible body, with a soul undefiled; while their intelligence will never vanish from their brain, and their joy will never fade from their heart; all will be as fresh, vigorous, and beautiful when myriads of ages shall have rolled away, as when they first took possession of their vast imperishable treasures. As we contemplate this inheritance of the saints, all earth's treasures appear as shadows, as nothing—less than nothing—and vanity. And when this inheritance is reached, the prediction of the prophet will receive its highest fulfilment. "Their soul shall be as a watered garden, and they shall not sorrow any more at all." As the believer enters heaven some angel-spirit whispers, or some glorified one who had gone before says to him,

employ; we shall think of the *past*
 whence we were hewn, the pit fr
 digged, the curse from which
 the power of darkness from
 lated. Then we shall thir
 thousand glories which wil'
 we shall think of the ' and from off al
 future will unfold and . there."
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UNEXPECTED DEFEAT.

Though ye fight with the Chaldeans, ye shall not prosper."

He says to a nation which declares war with a country, "Though ye fight, ye shall not prosper," it matters not how great the army, how disciplined the troops, how valiant the men, how heroic the officers, how skilled the generals, how profoundly versed in the art of war the commander-in-chief. Nor will it avail that the navy is powerful, that her ships are ironclad, her guns of greatest calibre, that the men are brave, and their commanders daring and dauntless as a Nelson. If God says, "Ye shall not prosper," neither the power of the army, nor the prowess of the navy, will command success and secure a victory. "The great, the mighty God, the Lord of hosts, great in counsel and mighty in work," can so derange the best arranged plans, and so frustrate the best laid schemes, that the battle shall not be to the strong. Among the best disciplined troops that ever appeared in the battle-field He can create a panic, so that "one man shall chase a thousand, and two shall put ten thousand to flight." The will of the Lord decides all battles. If He says to a nation at war, "Ye shall *not* prosper," the army returns vanquished. If He says, "Ye *shall* prosper,"

"Welcome, brother! Welcome to this blessed abode!"

"Sing the new song,
Thy triumph has begun,
Thy tears are wiped away,
Thy night is gone."

Yes, "All tears shall be wiped from off all faces,"
and "There shall be no night there."

A PREDICTED DEFEAT.

JER. xxxii. 5: "Though ye fight with the Chaldeans, ye shall not prosper."

WHEN God says to a nation which declares war with another country, "Though ye fight, ye shall not prosper," it matters not how great the army, how disciplined the troops, how valiant the men, how heroic the officers, how skilled the generals, how profoundly versed in the art of war the commander-in-chief. Nor will it avail that the navy is powerful, that her ships are ironclad, her guns of greatest calibre, that the men are brave, and their commanders daring and dauntless as a Nelson. If God says, "Ye shall not prosper," neither the power of the army, nor the prowess of the navy, will command success and secure a victory. "The great, the mighty God, the Lord of hosts, great in counsel and mighty in work," can so derange the best arranged plans, and so frustrate the best laid schemes, that the battle shall not be to the strong. Among the best disciplined troops that ever appeared in the battle-field He can create a panic, so that "one man shall chase a thousand, and two shall put ten thousand to flight." The will of the Lord decides all battles. If He says to a nation at war, "Ye shall *not* prosper," the army returns vanquished. If He says, "Ye *shall* prosper,"

the army returns victorious. The Lord of hosts is the God of armies, and He giveth the victory to whomsoever He please.

Now, as with nations, so with men. If God, in anger, should say to a man entering upon some one of the many avocations of life, "Ye shall not prosper," that man may rise up early and sit up late; he may eat the bread of carefulness; he may be cunning, crafty, clever; he may buy, sell, and speculate in every market in the world; but all to no purpose. Failure after failure will follow his every plan and scheme; he cannot succeed, for in anger, on account of some sin and iniquity, God has said, "Ye shall not prosper." When this decree has gone forth against a man, success is out of the question. Nothing can set aside the decision of His holy mind and righteous will.

To the question, What are the conditions of success in any important enterprise or undertaking? philosophers would reply, That the means be adapted to the end, that there be wisdom and skill in the use of these means, and that provision be made for all possible contingencies. Let these conditions be observed, say our wise men, and success is certain. And so, perhaps, success would be certain if there were no' presiding power, by the interposition of which all human plans and purposes may be frustrated; but such a power existing, it is obvious that success depends not simply on well adapted plans, but on the will of God. If it be the will of God that an enterprise shall succeed, success will follow well-developed and skilfully-executed plans; but if

it be His will that the enterprise shall not succeed, failure will follow every effort, however well planned and however skilfully executed. Everything, then, depends on the will of God, from a successful campaign down to a prosperous journey. "Though ye fight with the Chaldeans, ye shall not prosper." "Making request if by any means now, at length, I might have a prosperous journey, by *the will of God*, to come unto you." As, then, everything depends on the will of God, from the issues of a great battle down to the safety of a long or short journey, that will should be consulted, and God's blessing should be sought, in all our undertakings. "In everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."

And here let it be borne in mind that there is not a request which man can make to God, but He can answer that request. He can fulfil man's every desire, and grant his every petition. Nothing is too hard for the Lord; indeed, nothing *is* hard, nothing *is* difficult. With Him it is as easy to crush an empire as a moth, to dry up the deep sea as a shallow stream, to scatter a people by the fierceness of His anger as chaff before the fury of a storm. His power knows no limits. "He can do exceedingly abundantly beyond all we can ask or think."

But while the power of God is unlimited, it is obvious He does not do all that He is able to do. His power is regulated by His will. "Whatsoever He *pleaseth* that doeth He." He does what He does according to the good pleasure of His will, His will being nothing less than the dictate and decision of

infallible wisdom. With God there is no such thing as caprice, or arbitrary determinations. As we look on all His creative works, we adoringly confess, "In wisdom hast Thou made them all." And if in wisdom God has made all things, so in wisdom He governs all things, and in ways too mysterious for us to understand, makes "all things work together for good to them that love Him, to them who are the called, according to His purpose." It is true, men who love God may fight with the Chaldeans and lose the battle; they may be diligent in business and be unsuccessful; they may struggle with earth's trials and be overcome; and yet, in the midst of all that seems to be against them, God is making all things promotive of their real welfare.

Never let us forget that out of darkness God can bring forth light, out of chaos He can bring forth order, and out of evil He can bring forth good. These things He may not do for us while in the body, and in the midst of our darkness and confusion we may hang our harps on the willows and sit in sackcloth and ashes. But no sooner are we out of the body, and present with the Lord, than we become jubilant and happy—

" We raise the song unsung before,
We doff the sackcloth that we wore."

We put on immortality, and shout, "Victory, through the blood of the Lamb."

TRUTHS GREAT AND MIGHTY.

JER. xxxiii. 3: "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not."

"We know but in part." Our knowledge is very limited, and without Divine teaching we should know nothing—nothing essentially great, or of vital importance. Suppose God had taught us nothing either by revelation or inspiration, what should we know of those "great and mighty things" which relate to our highest interest? Just nothing at all. Ignorance total and profound had enveloped our minds as in gross midnight darkness—darkness such as that which covers Pagan lands, and in which are the abodes of superstition, and the habitations of cruelty. By His word God has already shown us great and mighty things which we knew not, and could not have known. Incarnation, Redemption, Regeneration, Resurrection, and man's final destiny, are great and mighty things of which we could have known nothing but for Revelation. Where the Bible is unknown, these things are unknown, and men walk on in darkness. Thanks be to God for the Bible, without which darkness had covered the land, and gross darkness the people.

But with all the light the Bible throws on the

great truths we have mentioned, there is a vast amount of ignorance, touching the *reality* and *supreme importance* of the truths in question. Men see these truths as though they see them not: they deem them of no real value and importance, either to themselves or to others; hence they give to them no more thought and attention than if they were fictions of the human brain, or "old wives' fables." But when God, who brought light out of darkness, shines into the dark mind, that mind then perceives that the great and mighty truths of Revelation *are great and mighty*, demanding the most prayerful thought, the most serious consideration. Thus, teaching by the Spirit differs from the teaching of Revelation *only* in the matter of giving to the mind a due and proper appreciation of the truths revealed.

The truths of science are what they are, whether men understand them or not; but until men are instructed in them, they are not seen and understood to be what they are. So the truths of Revelation are what they are, neither of less or greater importance at one time than at another; but until by the Divine Spirit men are enlightened in regard to these truths, they are not seen and understood in all their essential greatness and paramount importance. The Spirit takes of the things of Christ, and reveals them to the heart; and the things which the Spirit reveals are great and mighty—greater and mightier things "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man to conceive," than those which relate to the great salvation. In value,

importance, and results, they infinitely transcend all other things.

The things which pertain to history, science, or politics, however valuable in themselves, or to the world in which we live, dwindle into insignificance and nothingness when compared with the great verities, the mighty truths of the Gospel. Men in the pride of their intellect, and in the greater pride of their heart, may pompously talk of the great and mighty truths of science and philosophy; but we ask, What have they done for the world, or for man, compared with the greater and mightier truths of the Gospel? Have the truths of science, or the deductions of philosophy, ever answered that question of questions, "What must I do to be saved?" Have they ever thrown a single ray of light on the triple question, What am I? where am I? and whither am I going? Have they ever healed the broken in heart, and bound up their wounds? Have they ever led men to contentment with their lot, and resignation to the Divine will? Have they ever taught the living how to live, and the dying how to die? Never, never. We do not undervalue the truths of science and philosophy, we speak of them in no disparaging terms; but we do say that the very highest truths of science can only have reference to things temporal—things which perish in their using, while the great truths of the Gospel relate to things eternal, and in the cordial reception of these truths man's present welfare and future interest are secured. Looking, therefore, at results, we ask, Which are the greater, the mightier

truths? the truths of science, or the truths of revelation?

But while the truths of the Gospel are great and mighty, which God has shown to them who have sat at the feet of Jesus and learnt of Him, we who have learnt of Him must not suppose that we have as yet attained, or are already perfect—that is to say, we must not think that we have learnt all that is to be learnt, and that no other great and mighty truths are to be revealed and made known. The fact is, there are yet “deep things of God,” which to us at present are unknown. If there are things which the angels, with their loftier intellects and purer hearts, desire to look into, but the depths of which they cannot reach; even so are there things which our feeble minds cannot comprehend, and our partially sanctified hearts cannot understand. It is well to be conscious of our ignorance, and the deeper this consciousness, the greater will be our desire for more light, to obtain which there must be fervent, earnest prayer. “Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not.”

And not only must there be prayer, there must be also a holy walking with God. God does not give to every man wisdom, but He does give to “the man that is good in His sight, wisdom, and knowledge, and joy.” Thus to the prayerful and the holy, God makes revelations of great and mighty truths, while men of greater talent and higher culture are left in total ignorance thereof. “Father, I thank thee that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto

babes." Taught of God, babes become philosophers ; and untaught of God, philosophers are but babes. The highest wisdom is to know God, and Jesus Christ, whom He has sent ; and this is given to babes, *i.e.*, to persons who "desire the sincere milk of the word," while philosophers, commonly so-called, need to be taught "the first principles of the oracles of God."

That is a poor philosophy which leaves men unacquainted with those great and mighty things which pertain to his eternal welfare, which leaves him to grope on in darkness through life's pathway, and then to die and perish in his sins. That is the true philosophy, the true wisdom, which brings life and immortality to light, and then leads the soul to the full realization of those blessings when the shadows of time shall have passed away. Does any man lack this wisdom, this truest and highest of all philosophies ? "Let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not." Multitudes think they have this wisdom when they have it not ; hence, for it they never seek and never pray. With all their learning and acquirements, their knowledge of nature, science, and arts, they are too proud to ask for wisdom, which would be a confession of ignorance. Mistaking knowledge for wisdom, they imagine wisdom is a very common thing, the portion and heritage of almost every well-educated man ; but it is not so. Learning may prevail, knowledge may abound ; wit may be common, but "*Wisdom is rare, Lorenzo,*" and is the portion only of those who are taught of God ; who sit at the feet of Jesus, and learn of Him.

A MAN OF GOD DESCRIBED.

JER. xxxv. 4: "A man of God."

AND who is a man of God? A man of God is a Christian, and a Christian is a man of God. We take them to be convertible terms. Between a man of God in the Old Testament and a Christian in the New, there is no difference; they are alike in all that relates to moral character and religious faith. A man of God is so called because he is God's workmanship. God has made him what he is, and he, recognising the fact, gratefully confesses, "By the grace of God I am what I am."

Now a man of God is a noble character; he is the noblest of God's works. Of all types of men he is the highest. We hesitate not to say that he is the holiest of men, the wisest of men, the best of men, the richest of men, the most honoured of men, and a man who has the finest and fairest prospects of all the children of men.

First. He is the holiest of men. There is not a holy thing under heaven but what he admires, and loves with a pure heart fervently. The Holy Bible, the Holy Sabbath, the Holy Sanctuary, the Holy Supper, he loves with a sincerity and an ardour which nothing can destroy. Fond of his Bible, he reads it daily, and esteems its precious truths more

than his necessary food. With profound regard for the Sabbath, he hails its dawn with delight, and enjoys its sacred hours, as a sweet earnest of the rest which remains for the people of God. Attached to the Sanctuary, he sings with child-like simplicity,—

“ I have been there, and still will go,
’Tis like a little heaven below.”

And when the period comes round for the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, he takes his seat at the sacramental board, and, with a joy silent and deep, he “shows forth the Lord’s death till He come.”

Nor is his love of holy duties less genuine and sincere than his love of holy things. The holy duty of prayer, he loves. Such is his unquenchable love of prayer that he may be said to “pray without ceasing,” and no earthly power can induce him to give up this holy exercise, no, not even the threat and the prospect of a violent death. The holy duty of praise he loves; his love of praise is instinctive. Like a bird, he can sing anywhere and everywhere; he can sing among the cedars and the palm trees; he can sing among the briers and the thorns; he can sing when on the wing; yes, and he can sing, too, when caught and caged. “At midnight Paul and Silas prayed and *sang praises* unto God, and the prisoners heard them.” Good men are birds of Paradise; and, caged or uncaged, birds *must* sing.

The holiness of a man of God is still further to be seen in his love of holy men; he loves all the holy brethren, to whatever section of the Church

they may belong; he loves the holy more than the wealthy, and can honestly say—

“ Let others choose the sons of mirth
To give a relish to their wine ;
I love the men of heavenly birth,
Whose thoughts and language are divine.”

While, with a holy catholicity of spirit, he breathes that gracious benediction of Paul's: “ Grace be with all them who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.” “ A man of God ” is the holiest of men.

Secondly. A man of God is the wisest of men. He may be a man of no education; he may be what scholars would call “an unlearned and ignorant man;” and yet of all the children of men there are none so wise as he. His wisdom is to be seen in the provision he makes for his everlasting future: he has the wisdom of the ant, which provides her food in the summer, and gathers her meat in the harvest; he lays up for himself treasures in heaven—treasures ample enough to meet his eternal, his undying wants. Other men make no provision whatever for the future. Oh the folly! folly over which angels weep, and demons laugh. O foolish men! who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the dictates of common prudence, and make some provision for your everlasting future? The ant is wiser than you. With a winter before her, she makes provision for the winter. With an eternity before you, you make no provision for eternity.

See also the wisdom of a man of God, in the fact

that he is prepared for whatever may happen. If a storm should overtake him, he is prepared for it; he has cast anchor within the veil, and, with anchor-hold there, he will neither founder nor strand. If he should be attacked by the powers of darkness, and be exposed to the fiery darts of the wicked one, he is prepared for the onslaught, for he has on the whole armour of God, and thus equipped, he shall stand and not fall, or if he fall, he shall rise again, and in the end conquer. If death should come, like a thief in the night, to break into the house of his tabernacle, to take away his soul, he is prepared for it; for as soon as the soul is taken out of the house it is delivered up into the hands of the Lord Jesus. The Lord claims it as His property—property which He has purchased with His own blood, and which, when absent from the body, He takes to be present with Him in heaven. “A man of God” is the wisest of men, seeing that he makes provision for his everlasting future, and is prepared for whatever may happen.

Thirdly. A man of God is the best of men. As of two or more portraits, that is the best which is most like the original, so of two or more men, he is the best who is most like God. Now a man of God has been created anew after the image of Him who created him; he therefore reflects the Divine likeness, and in all the moral features of his renewed nature, is more like God than any of the children of men; he is therefore the best of men in that, notwithstanding his many imperfections, he is the best likeness of his Great Original.

Then he is the best of men, in that he is the best adapted to promote the glory of God and the welfare of his fellow immortals. The best instrument is that which is the best adapted to the purpose for which it was made. Men of the world are not adapted to subserve the high and holy purposes of their creation; their life is a blank, a blunder, they miss the great end of their existence; they neither glorify God, nor promote the welfare of their fellows. A man of God does both: for both he is eminently adapted. God has morally fitted him for both these high ends, and for this reason he is as superior to other men as silver is to copper, or as gold is to tinsel. "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour."

Fourthly. A man of God is the richest of men. In saying this we may perhaps provoke a smile in the minds of those who have no other idea of wealth than that of silver and gold, houses and lands. Paul had quite another idea of wealth, and poor as he was, looked upon himself as richer than the richest of the sons of men, saying, in pure paradoxical style, "As poor, yet making many rich;" "as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." A man of God is unquestionably the richest of men; his wealth he can never lose, he can never become insolvent. Other men may lose all they have, and when they die they do lose all they possessed, and become bankrupts, for they brought nothing into this world, and it is certain they carry nothing out. How different the man of God. 'Tis true he brought nothing into the world, but it is *not* true he carries nothing out, for he carries out an abundance of wealth,

"durable riches," the riches of love and joy, and peace; he goes out of the world "an heir of God, and a joint heir with Jesus Christ," and therefore rich, immensely rich. Talk we of rich men?—

"He is the '*rich*' man whom the truth makes rich,
And all are '*poor*' besides."

Fifthly. A man of God is the most honoured of men. To him belongs the honour of sonship. God is his Father, and God the kindred owns. To him belongs the honour of priesthood; he is a priest now, and will be a "priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec." To him belongs the honour of daily converse with God. "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." To him belongs the honour of being "clothed with the garments of salvation, and adorned with the robe of righteousness." Which of the sons of the mighty has honour like unto this? and "this honour have all His saints."

Look we now for a moment at the prospects of a man of God. How great! how glorious! He has the prospect of an "abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ;" the prospect of a painless, deathless, felicitous existence; the prospect of association with the purest, the noblest, the highest of beings, creation's *gems*, and redemption's *jewels*, with Christ in the midst thereof—the prospect of "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." No such prospects as these present themselves to a man of the world; before him there is nothing but "a fearful looking for of

judgment." Who would not, then, be a man of God ? seeing that such a man is the holiest, the wisest, the best, the most honoured of men in this world, while his prospects in relation to the next are those of honour, glory, immortality, eternal life. The highest wish a father can cherish for his son is, that "by the grace of God" he may become "a man of God."

THREATENED PUNISHMENT.

JER. xxxvi. 31: "And I will punish him and his seed, and his servants, for their iniquity."

THERE is a sentiment which has laid hold of the minds of some men, namely, that God is "too merciful to punish." They tell us God is a kind and loving Father, who will forgive the faults of His children, and not punish them. Such a sentiment shows a misconception of the character of God, and a wilful ignorance of the facts of history, and the suffering condition of this present evil world.

"Too merciful to punish." What! And was not Adam driven out of Eden, and sentenced to die? What! And was there no such a thing as a deluge, sweeping off from the face of the earth an ungodly world? What! And did the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah suffer no overthrow? What! And has God never sent the famine, the pestilence, and the sword, as a punishment for the sins of the people? What! And has God so constituted the human mind as that transgression and sin may be committed with impunity? Of all the errors into which the human mind has fallen, relative to God and His government, we know of none more unscriptural and irrational than that God is too merciful to punish.

The facts of history confront it, and declare it to be a lie, and not the truth.

Superficial thinkers and *pseudo* philosophers imagine that punishment is inconsistent with mercy, and that because "God is love," and because "He is merciful," He cannot and will not punish transgressors. The fact is that punishment, instead of being destructive of mercy, is itself merciful—merciful not to the transgressor, but to the community of which the transgressor is a member. What more unmerciful, to say nothing of unrighteousness—what more unmerciful to a community, than for a government to let go unpunished every transgressor of its laws? Such a procedure, instead of being merciful, would be cruel in the extreme, in that property and life would never be safe. There is, therefore, mercy in punishment as well as justice, and instead of God being too merciful to punish, He is too merciful *not* to punish. Yes, there is as much of mercy as there is of justice in that Divine declaration, "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished."

Of all the sins that have ever been committed, from the first transgression in Eden, down throughout all successive generations, not one has been committed with impunity. Every transgression and disobedience either has, or will, receive a just recompense of reward. How then, it may be asked, can sinners be pardoned and saved, if their sins are to be punished? We reply, they are pardoned and saved because their sins have been punished in the person of their Lord. "He was wounded for *our transgressions*, He was

bruised for *our iniquities*." And thus the sins of the *saved* have not gone unpunished. Had the saved been saved without the punishment due to their sins being borne by their great Surety, law in that case had been ignored, and justice had been slain on the shrine of mercy. But God can never ignore His own law, nor can He sacrifice justice on the altar of His mercy; hence He could never have pardoned sin and saved sinners, unless the punishment due to their sins had been borne by the Lord Jesus Christ.

As justice and mercy are two attributes of God, He can never be otherwise than both just and merciful—merciful and just. In the economy of redemption, the two attributes exist in friendly alliance, and are never antagonistic the one to the other. If we might personify them, we should say, they love each other, and on Calvary they kissed each other, and are never separated, either in the Divine nature or the Divine government.

In all the judgments of God which came upon rebellious Israel, there were justice and mercy—justice towards them which fell, and mercy towards them which fell not. "Behold," says Paul, "the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off."

We admit that in some of the terrible judgments which have come upon the ungodly, it is difficult, at first sight, to see mercy; but as mercy can never abdicate the throne of the Divine heart, and can

never be antagonistic to justice, there must be mercy as well as justice in the severest dealings of God with man, however obscured mercy may be by the thunder clouds of the Divine displeasure.

The deluge was not all justice, unmixed with mercy, inasmuch as that fearful judgment put a stop for a time to the progress of sin and the aboundings of iniquity, and doubtless acted beneficially on the new world and on all succeeding generations. The destruction of the Cities of the Plain was not all justice, unmixed with mercy; it was mercy, as well as justice, to sweep off those plague spots from the earth. Heaven is not all mercy, unmixed with justice. In the redeemed, with their crowns, we may see the mercy of God. In the Redeemer, with His scars, "the print of the nails," we may see the justice of God. Hell is not all justice, unmixed with mercy. In the suffering there we see the justice of God. In the probable moral effect of that suffering upon the welfare and destiny of other worlds, we may see the mercy of God. Justice never does an act that mercy disapproves, and mercy never performs an act that justice disapproves; they act in perfect harmony, and never come into collision the one with the other.

In some cases mercy is more conspicuous than justice, and in other cases justice is more conspicuous than mercy, but both are there. In heaven, for example, mercy shines in all its effulgence, while in perdition justice shines in all its awful glare; but let it not for a moment be supposed that in punish-

ment there is the absence of mercy, or that in pardon there is the absence of justice. Neither of these glorious attributes is ever absent from the Divine mind or the Divine government, but are always present, blended together as beautifully as the colours of the rainbow which arch the heavens.

But while mercy and justice are ever present in the Divine government, yet we know that such may be the conduct of certain transgressors, as to determine the Divine mind to let justice take its course, without the intervention of mercy on their behalf. This was the case with fallen angels, and will be the case with the impenitent and unbelieving among men. The expulsion from heaven of the angels who sinned was justice without the intervention of mercy; and the doom which awaits the ungodly will be the same. But while mercy will not intervene to stay the due course of law, yet the banishment of the wicked from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of His power, will be as merciful towards other worlds as it is now merciful to society to banish great criminals from the country where their crimes have been perpetrated. In the dealings of God with this our fallen world, "Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord," in relation to all who believe; and in relation to those who believe not, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, justice reigns in harmony with mercy unto eternal condemnation, as the result of despising the over-

tures of mercy, and neglecting the great salvation. "God is love," and "God is just." Love and justice are both attributes of His being and principles of His moral government of the world and the universe; hence the wicked will not go unpunished, nor the righteous unsaved.

FALSE CHARGES.

JER. xxxvii. 14 : "Then said Jeremiah, It is false; I fall not away to the Chaldeans."

FALSE charges, false witnesses, false words, false pretences, false weights and measures, have been so common in this false and deceitful world of ours, that we deem it no marvel that David should have said in his haste, "All men are liars."

But all men are not liars: there are some lovers of truth in the world—men who would scorn a lie, and sooner die than utter a falsehood. All honour to such men! they are men of noble birth, the children of God, of Him who cannot lie; they are disciples of the world's greatest Teacher—of Him who said, "I am the truth," the embodiment and manifestation of truth; they are Christians, and the Christian is the noblest, the truest, the highest style of man.

When a man is wrongly charged, it is but right that he should defend himself, deny the charge, and tell the accuser to his face, "It is false." So did Jeremiah, and so ought every man who has any regard for his own reputation as a man of honour and integrity. A man may not be justified in inflicting summary punishment upon his accuser, or in bringing an action at law against him for libel;

but he is perfectly justified in going to him, and, with a look of indignation, telling him to his face, "It is false, it is false." To be silent under a false charge is tacitly to admit the charge to be true, and thus to condemn ourselves. Let then every false accusation be met by a bold and dignified denial. For this we have the example, not only of good Jeremiah, but of Christ and His Apostles, who did not hesitate to deny many things laid to their charge, and thus virtually said to their accusers, "It is false, it is false."

It is sad to see good men falsely accused; it is sadder still to see men so utterly depraved as to be guilty of bringing false accusations, knowing them to be false. Better be the accused than the false accuser; better be the robbed than the robber; better be the slave than the slave-master; yes,—

" Dear as freedom is, and in my heart's
Just estimation prized above all price,
I had much rather be myself the slave,
And wear the bonds, than fasten them on him."

So sang Cowper. So said Clarkson, and Buxton, and Wilberforce, in their burning zeal for emancipation. The slave-master is a greater slave than his vassal; he binds his vassal with chains which death will knock off, but he himself is in "the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity," bonds which make him the slave of Satan, and by which he is leading him into everlasting captivity. Talk we of freedom? there is no freedom apart from real vital

religion. Never did our favourite poet pen a truer sentiment than when he wrote—

“He is the freeman whom the truth makes free,
And all are slaves besides”

From the fall of man the world has been in a state of slavery, and is in a state of slavery still; it lies in the hands of the wicked one. The gospel of Christ is the only emancipator. It is the gospel which proclaims, and which “gives liberty to the captives, and opens the prison-doors to them which are bound.” We who are Christians obtained our freedom through the gospel, and shall we not do what we can to obtain the freedom of others by seeking to spread that gospel all the world over? What, and shall we who were once slaves have no pity for slaves? Shall we who were once captives have no compassion for captives? Shall we see the army of the living God go forth to emancipate slaves, and to give liberty to captives, and not supply that army with the sinews of war? Shall we profess pity for the perishing, and not help to save them? Away with such profession! “It is false, it is false.” Real pity puts forth a helping hand, and helps to rescue the abject sons and daughters of misery from bondage and distress. “Beloved, let us not love in word only, but in *deed*,” or we shall subject ourselves to the charge of being hollow and deceitful men, and in the sight of God shall be found liars.

Real Christians are men of real pity. In all they do there is genuineness and truth. And yet

no class of men under heaven have had so many things laid to their charge which were not true. The Apostles, the first preachers of justification by faith *alone*, were accused of encouraging a life of sin, to the end that grace might abound. This wicked accusation Paul indignantly resents, and asks, "How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?" The early Christians had laid to their charge sedition and the turning of the world upside down, but the charge was false. More peaceable men never existed, and men more loyal never belonged to the Roman, nor any other empire. The martyrs had laid to their charge "*heresy*," and on the ground of this charge they were tortured, imprisoned, and put to death; but the charge was false: they held "*the truth* as it is in Jesus"—truth that was dearer to them than liberty or life; hence their sufferings and death. We verily believe that before another tribunal—the judgment-seat of Christ—it will be proved that the heretics were not those who suffered and were put to death, but those who inflicted the suffering, and who struck the death-blow. In all ages there have always been men who have called *truth* heresy, and *heresy* truth.

The pulpit and the press of our country are putting forth theories and dogmas to which we might apply the words of the prophet, and pronounce them false. The theory of apostolic succession; the theory of baptismal regeneration; the theory of transubstantiation; the theory of the sinner's annihilation; the theory of universal restoration; the theory of the universal Fatherhood of God, Socinian

in its origin and tendency;—what are all these ancient and modern theories which men have worked out from their own brain, and not from the word of God, but false reasonings and pernicious errors? Amid so many errors, so many trumpet-sounds from the pulpits of our land and the press of our country, sounds which lull the conscience rather than prepare the soul for battle, how important the admonition of our Lord, “Take heed *what ye hear*.” And in this day of books, which are issuing rapidly from the press and covering the land, not much less important would be *this* admonition, *Take heed what ye read*. Every hearer of pulpit discourses, and every reader of religious literature, should follow the example of the noble Bereans, who did not take it for granted that all was scriptural truth to which they listened, but “searched the Scriptures daily, to see if those things were so.” And if the appeal to Scripture at that day was important, how much more important in this our day, when errors have multiplied a hundredfold, and Antichrists have increased beyond compare. Let us, then, go to the law and the testimony, God’s own infallible standard of truth, and by it test Church polities, Church creeds, Church rites, and Church customs; and if a Church polity, or creed, or rite, or custom does not correspond to this Divine standard, let us not hesitate to declare it to be *false*, and with the bold declaration of that which is false, let us be prepared to declare the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth—the truth as it is in Scripture, “the truth as it is in Jesus.”

Of the universal spread of truth we have no doubt, no misgivings. Time will not weaken it, nor stay its progress. "The greatest friend of truth is time." Time will give to it strength and permanence. Time will give to it the victory. That which is false is rotten, and will perish, while truth is imperishable and immutable, and, like its great Author, is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." The great storehouse of truth is the Bible. We take this book, and clasping it to our hearts, we cry—

" *This, this* is true, should all else prove a lie,
And in this truth I hope to live and die."

O B E D I E N C E .

JER. xxxviii. 20: "Obey, I beseech thee, the voice of the Lord, which I speak unto thee; so it shall be well unto thee, and thy soul shall live."

SAFETY lies in obedience to the Divine Will—danger in disobedience. "Obey the voice of the Lord, so it shall be well with thee, and thy soul shall live." Disobey that voice, and it shall be ill with thee. There is scarcely a loss which an intelligent creature has sustained, but what may be traced to an act of disobedience to the Divine Will. Angels lost heaven because they obeyed not the voice of the Lord their God. Adam lost Eden from the same cause. The Jews lost their liberty, and went into captivity, because of their disobedience. Thousands of those that came up out of Egypt lost their lives and perished in the wilderness, because of their rebellion. The captain with whom Paul sailed into Italy lost his ship because he hearkened not to the voice of Paul, which was the voice of God. Through disobedience to the Divine Will, a man has lost his health, another his property, a third his reputation; and many a man has lost his own soul. Through disregarding the voice of the Lord these fearful losses have ensued.

Had the voice of the Lord been obeyed, angels

had never lost their heaven ; Adam had never been driven out of Eden ; the Jews had never been sent into captivity ; the multitudes that came out of Egypt had not perished in the wilderness. Had the voice of the Lord been obeyed, the captain with whom Paul sailed had not lost his ship ; Ananias and his wife had not lost their lives ; and Judas had not lost his soul. In these cases, and a thousand others which might be enumerated, we see the fearful results of disobedience to the Divine Will. "In keeping His commandments there is great reward." In disobeying them there is great loss—loss irreparable and eternal.

Shall we now inquire into the causes of this disobedience to the Divine Will ? The first cause of the first act of disobedience is a mystery—a mystery profound—a mystery which no man can fathom. Of the origin of sin much has been written, but no rays of light have as yet been thrown upon this dark subject ; it remains the same inexplicable mystery as ever. God, and God only, understands the origin of sin ; that is to say, He, and He alone, knows the first cause of the first act of disobedience to His own Divine Will. The cause of the second act of disobedience is less mysterious. We see the tempter approaching our first parents, and by insinuations and lies tempting them to disobedience. It is not so much a marvel that intelligent creatures should fall into temptation, being tempted ; but that holy and intelligent creatures should fall into temptation, without being tempted, is a mystery which has yet to be solved and understood. Fallen angels had no

tempter—fallen man had. Both were verily guilty in disobeying the voice of the Lord their God; but the greater sinners we take to be those who sinned without a tempter tempting them to disobey the voice Divine, and, as a consequence, will receive, if they have not already received, the “greater condemnation.”

Since the fall of angels, and the fall of our first parents, two causes have operated which have led to universal disobedience—namely, Satanic agency and man’s depravity. “All have sinned, and have come short of the Divine glory,” for that all are tempted, and in addition to the temptation, all are the subjects of a depraved nature; hence the mystery of sin or disobedience lessens in proportion as we discover the causes which lead thereto, but which causes do not justify the acts of disobedience, for nothing can justify a rational and an intelligent creature in disobeying the voice of God, its Creator and moral Governor.

With this brief glance at the causes of disobedience, we may just notice the one moving, prompting cause of obedience, which is love. Love prompts the angels to obey the Divine behests: “They do His commandments, hearkening to the voice of His word.” Love prompts the spirits of the just made perfect: they are “ministers of His, that do His pleasure.” Love prompted the Apostles to obey the Divine commission, and to go far hence unto the Gentiles to preach the Gospel to every creature. “The love of Christ constraineth us,” was their confession, the truth of which their whole lives

illustrated and confirmed. Love prompted the martyrs to obey the voice of the Lord, which they distinctly heard in their heart and conscience. To that noble army God spake, and to every soldier of the cross said, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." The call was obeyed. Faithful they were: they fought manfully the battle of truth; they died in the conflict, and then passed into the heavens, to receive the promised reward.

Of all the powers in the universe there is none so great as the power of love. Law, with all its threatenings of pains and penalties; judgments, with all their crushing weight and destructive power; morality, with all its promises of rewards;—are feeble powers of influence, compared with the mighty power of love. "Love is strong as death," and who can resist the king of terrors?

Let us now look for a moment at the pleasures of obedience to the Divine Will. These pleasures are threefold. There is a present pleasure, arising from the testimony and approbation of conscience. Conscience gives its approval of every act of loving obedience, and the pleasure of an approving conscience is angelic, Christlike, Godlike. Then there is a reflective pleasure, a pleasure arising from the reflection of having obeyed the voice Divine. This was Paul's pleasure, when in the review of his life he said, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." And this was Christ's pleasure, when on drawing near to the close of life, He said, "I have glorified Thee on the

earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do." Then there is an anticipatory pleasure—the pleasure of looking forward to the Divine approval, and hearing from His lips, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter ye into the joy of your Lord." "Blessed are they that *do* His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

And as there is a threefold pleasure in obedience, so also there is a threefold pain in disobedience—a *present*, a *reflective*, and an *anticipatory*. The man who disobeys the voice of the Lord has a present pain—the pain of an accusing conscience; then by and by he will have the pain of reflection; and when death draws near, he will have the pain of anticipation—the pain of soon hearing the Lord say to him, "I never knew you, depart from me," words which will fix his destiny, and seal his doom. Let, then, the sinner obey the voice of the Lord Jesus in the Gospel, and it shall be well with him; he shall not be disowned, he shall not depart from the presence of the Lord, he shall not die, but live. Let the believer obey the voice of his Lord and Master, and it shall be well with him; he shall live in the enjoyment of the Divine favour, and when Christ shall come "to take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel," he shall live and reign with Him for ever and ever.

See, then, the importance of evangelical obedience; and if any man should be so deluded as to suppose

that a public profession of Christianity, or the adoption of a church creed, will save him, and secure for him an entrance into heaven, let him listen to the teaching of the Lord Jesus, who declares in language most solemn and emphatic, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that *doeth* the will of my Father which is in heaven." Not that obedience saves the soul. Obedience is no basis of hope, no ground of merit—

**"The best obedience of my hands
Dares not appear before Thy throne."**

It avails nothing in the matter of a sinner's justification; and yet without obedience, the man who may have held office in the church, and preached to others, will find himself a castaway. Christ is the author of eternal salvation, not unto all who profess Him, nor unto all who preach Him, but unto all who *obey* Him. Obedience is the sign of faith, and the manifestation of love. Those who believe, *obey*. Those who love, *obey*. Where there is no obedience, there is neither faith nor love; and without faith in Christ, and love to His dear name, salvation is an impossibility. We therefore, the preachers of the Gospel, and the teachers of Christianity, take the words of the prophet, and to each of our hearers and readers say, "Obey, we beseech thee, the voice of the Lord, which we speak unto thee; so it shall be well with thee, and thy soul shall live."

TRUST.

JER. xxxix. 18: "I will surely deliver thee, and thou shalt not fall by the sword, but thy life shall be for a prey unto thee: because thou hast put thy trust in me, saith the Lord."

THERE is no enterprise on which man can enter, and no work in which he can be engaged, be that work secular or religious, that will ever succeed, unless God give it success. This is the uniform teaching of Scripture, the Book *divine*. It is therefore the wisdom of every man, whatever be his vocation, or whatever the particular object he may wish to accomplish, to trust in the Lord, which trust is the humble reliance of the soul on the Lord for success.

We are aware that this trust in a power Divine, and in a hand unseen, has been regarded by certain scoffers and sceptics as fanatical. Their idea is, that men should trust *only* to their own powers, mental and physical, for the realization of their fondest hopes and cherished desires. These failing them, they should seek the aid of men of influence, and high position in life, but they should never dream of obtaining help from God.

Now in direct opposition to these scoffers and sceptics, who see no help but in man, in an arm of flesh, David says, "It is better to trust in the Lord

than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes." A declaration, the truth of which, we think, must commend itself to every man's conscience, unless the conscience be seared as with a hot iron. Surely it must be better to trust in the *Infinite* than the finite, in the *Immutable* than the mutable, in the *Immortal* than the mortal, in the *Rock* than in dust and ashes.

Trust in the Lord has a wonderful influence in calming the mind and strengthening the heart when the storms of life arise and beat heavily upon us. Calm as the unrippled lake, and firm as the everlasting mountain, are they whose trust is in the Lord their God. The clouds blacken, the wind howls, the sea roars, the lightning flashes, the thunder peals, nature is convulsed as though she were about to give up the ghost and pass away; but amid the rage of the tempest and the fury of the storm, the man of God looks out from his pavilion, and calmly says, "I will trust and not be afraid." "The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea than the mighty waves of the sea." As we look at this perfect calm of the man of God in the midst of earth's wildest storms, we are constrained to unite with the Psalmist in saying, "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord."

The calm and the strength which trust in the Lord inspires, are not the only benefits which result from thus honouring the Lord. The Lord, pleased with the confidence placed in Him, oft rewards it with great and manifest tokens of His favour. To

Ebed-melech, the Ethiopian, God made the promise that he should not fall by the sword, *because*, saith God, thou hast put thy trust in Me. A great battle was fought and won by the sons of Reuben and their allies, *because* they put their trust in God. God gave them the victory in honour of their putting their trust in Him. Of the righteous it is said, "The Lord shall help them and deliver them, He shall deliver them from the wicked and save them, *because* they trust in Him." By trust God is honoured, and it is His wont to honour them that honour Him.

Trust in the Lord for the realization of the objects of our desire must not be supposed to supersede the necessity of effort. For the attainment of the ends we have in view, whatever they may be, whether secular or religious, we must *work* and *trust*, *trust* and *work*. God could give us all we desire without the toil of our hands, or the work of our brain, but then He must work miracles, and miracles are not His method of governing the world, or of fulfilling the desires of them that fear Him. Now and then He says to His people, "Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord," and a miracle is wrought for their deliverance; but as a general rule He says, Go, work. "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand." "Sow beside all waters." "Study to show thyself approved of God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed of his workmanship." "Be instant in season and out of season." Let Paul plant and Apollos water, and I will give the increase.

But while trust in the Lord must not be without effort, so neither must it be without prayer. The same authority which says, "Trust in Him at all times," also says, "Ye people, pour out your heart before Him." God will be inquired of. He will have men know that the help they need, if given, is given as an act of grace, and not as a matter of right. Prayer supposes the absence of all claim, for what a man has a claim to, he need not pray for. God does not require that men should ask for justice, justice being every man's due; but He does require that they should ask for grace; and the help which God gives in the time of need is an act of grace for which men have no legal right, or moral claim.

Let, then, trust and prayer accompany our every effort in all the enterprises of life, and God, who loves to see the trust, and to hear the prayer, will bless the work of our hands, and make our way prosperous. Many a life has been preserved, many a battle has been won, many an enterprise has been successful, *because* the parties have put their trust in the Lord, and prayed unto the mighty God of Jacob. Men of faith and prayer have Omnipotence on their side, and may confidently ask, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Faith, amid the howl of the wind, and the blast of the tempest, cries, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

"Live then the life of faith,
The life divine."

And thus living, "No weapon that is formed against

thee shall prosper." Thus living, God will assuredly say to you what He said to Ebed-melech, "I will deliver thee, *because* thou hast put thy trust in me, saith the Lord." "Trust then in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."

"Unshaken as the sacred hill,
And firm as mountains be;
Firm as a rock the soul shall rest,
That leans, O Lord, on Thee."

PERSECUTION.

JER. xl. 4: "And now, behold, I loose thee this day from the chains which are upon thy hands."

EVERY age of the world has witnessed the persecution of the saints. In the first family of man there was persecution. Abel fell a martyr to the faith which he held, and which he openly declared by "offering unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain," more excellent, because divinely appointed, and because it shadowed forth the death of Christ, the great sacrifice for sin. From that day onwards, through successive ages, the persecution of saints continued, and in the patriarchal age, and during the prophetic period, many of the saints suffered greatly. The nature and extent of their sufferings Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews, fully describes; he tells us, "Some were tortured, not accepting deliverance," *i.e.*, not accepting deliverance by a recantation of their faith, their faith being much more precious to them than life itself. "Others had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonments; they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented; they wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth."

Men who could thus go through all this suffering, privation, and torture, for conscience sake, Paul held in profoundest admiration, and passed upon them the highest encomium which words can express, when he said, "*Of whom the world was not worthy.*" It is as though he had said, The world was too base to be worthy of such sterling men—too polluted to be worthy of such holy men—too wicked to be worthy of such righteous men—too sensual to be worthy of such celestial men; and yet God kept them for a while in the world, to the end that by their influence, example, and labours, the world might be benefited and blessed. How kind and gracious of God to give to a godless world that of which it is not worthy. And if the world was not worthy of the men who laboured and toiled and suffered for its welfare, how much less was it worthy of the man Christ Jesus, who came "into the world not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." O the depths of that grace, which gave to the world Christ, of whom not only was the world not worthy, but one of the most eminent of saints felt that the latchet of His shoes he was not worthy to unloose! Had God given to the world only that of which it is worthy, not a single favour, blessing, or benefit, had been its portion.

The persecution of good men, which began with Abel, continued in greater or less degree through all subsequent ages down to the coming of Christ, and was the open manifestation of the enmity predicted between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. When Christ came the seed of the serpent,

with their hisses hissed Him, and with their stings stung Him, until at length they cried out, as with one voice, "Crucify Him, crucify Him;" and with wicked hands they crucified and slew the Lord of life and glory. The serpent bruised His heel, but He, in return, bruised the serpent's head, for "through death Christ destroyed death, and him that had the power of death, that is the devil." This enmity, which seemed to have reached its climax in the death of Christ, still showed itself in persecuting acts against the disciples of the Lord Jesus. The Lord foresaw and predicted that such would be the case, and the history of the Church, from the first to the nineteenth century, is a commentary on the words of Christ, and a fulfilment of all that He said would come to pass.

Persecution, while it has shown the depravity of persecutors, has tested and brought out the fidelity of the persecuted in all its Godlike strength and beauty. Had it been a question whether religious men were faithful men, faithful to their principles, their conscience, and their God; that question persecution may be said to have discussed and settled. In the face of weapons of torture, and implements of death, these men held fast their integrity, and one of them could say, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear to myself." This dauntless courage, and unswerving fidelity, characterised the whole of the noble army of martyrs, and gave to their characters a nobility which princes might envy, and which warriors could never attain. Persecution is a wicked thing, and a terrible evil; but as a mighty tempest shows the strength of the oak which stands

firm in the soil, despite the fury of the storm, so persecution shows the strength of principle in the men who remain unmoved amid its most fearful blasts.

And not only has persecution shown the strength of principle in good men, it has, moreover, tended to diffuse more widely the truth which it aimed to stem in its progress, and to destroy. Just as a strong wind scatters the ripe seeds of a flower garden, and thus causes to spring up flowers in places where otherwise they would never have grown; so persecution has scattered far and wide good men, the seed of the kingdom, which has led to the multiplication of believers, and the wider extension of the truth for which they suffered. Thus persecutors have been taken in their own craftiness, and have unwittingly aided in the spread of that truth, and in the diffusion of those principles, which, hating from their very hearts, they laboured to extirpate and destroy. It is thus that God makes "the wrath of man to praise Him;" it is thus that He brings light out of darkness and good out of evil, and makes all things subservient to His own honour and glory.

Painful as is the contemplation of the sufferings of the saints in all ages through persecution, it is some little relief to know that the sufferings endured were only of short duration, and that the persecuted ones were in due time delivered out of the hands of their enemies. Jeremiah had suffered much for conscience and for truth's sake; but the day came when the captain of the guard said to him, "And now, behold, I loose thee this day from the chains which are upon thy hands." And what this captain

of the guard said to Jeremiah, that God has said to every noble martyr when the day of his decease has come. Persecution may chain the hands, and load the body with irons; but death takes them all off, breaks every chain, destroys every fetter, gives to the soul perfect freedom, and bids it rise into the region of "the glorious liberty of the children of God." Time captivity is followed by eternal liberty; momentary afflictions are succeeded by "an eternal weight of glory;" sighs, groans, and tears, all give place to an eternal song of joy and triumph. Better, then, be the persecuted than the persecutor. Eternity will reverse the unjust order of things which has prevailed here. There the persecutor will be led captive into eternal captivity, and there the persecuted will enjoy a freedom glorious as that of angels, and eternal as the throne of God. Persecutors are Christ's enemies—their hostility to saints is hostility to Him, their persecutions of His disciples are persecutions of Him. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" And will these persecutors of Christ and His people go unpunished? Nay, verily. God looks upon them with a feeling of holy anger and righteous indignation, and has sworn, saying, "His enemies will I clothe with shame, but upon Himself shall His crown flourish." In these solemn words of a holy and righteous God, persecutors may read their doom, and the persecuted may see their destiny. The doom of the one will be awful; the destiny of the other glorious. Shame will cover the one; glory will crown the other.

BROKEN PROMISES.

JER. xlii. 6 : "Whether it be good, or whether it be evil, we will obey the voice of the Lord our God, to whom we send thee."

PROMISES are not always made in sincerity. Sometimes they are made in hypocrisy, with no intention of carrying them out. It was so in the case before us. Jeremiah had been deputed by certain parties to wait upon the Lord his God, in order that they might know His will as to the course they should take, and they promised, saying, that whatever answer he might receive, it should have their prompt attention : "Whether it be good, or whether it be evil, we will obey the voice of the Lord our God, to whom we send thee." The prophet went, and brought back the Lord's message ; but the promise to obey they failed to fulfil—they set at nought His counsel, and by so doing brought upon themselves threatened destruction, for, says the prophet, "Now, therefore, know certainly that ye shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, in the place whither ye desire to go and sojourn." Promises cannot be broken with impunity. Unfaithful and hypocritical men incur the Divine displeasure, and sooner or later judgments will overtake them.

But while promises are often broken through

infidelity and hypocrisy, there are other causes of failure, such, for example, as the want of ability to fulfil them. Many a good man has made a promise which he has not been able to fulfil; he has had the will, but not the power. Sickness or adversity has deprived him of the power to fulfil the engagement into which he had entered, and in such a case the failure is not an iniquity to be punished, but a calamity to be pitied.

Promises are often broken when made rashly, and in one's own strength. Look at Peter. Rashly, and in his own strength, he said to his Lord, "Though all men should deny thee, yet will not I;" yet when he stood before a servant-maid, the promise was broken. Rotten as the spider's web, it broke and gave way before the breath of the maiden, and he said, with all the rashness with which the promise was made, "I know not the man." Promises should never be hastily made, and should never be made at all without humble dependence on God for grace to carry them out. Man has no power of himself to fulfil a single promise, which in the kindness of his heart he may be disposed to make. Does he promise to visit a friend on the morrow, or to go with him into some city or town, or to assist him in some good work? The power to do so must be given him of God, for life and health are in the hands of God, and if these be not given or continued on the morrow, the promise must fail—it cannot be carried out. Let, then, every promise which man may make to man, be made in prayer to God, that He, in His great goodness, would give grace for its fulfilment.

When a man makes a public profession of Christ, he makes promises. By such a profession he promises to come out of the world and to be separate; to be loyal to Christ and faithful to His cause; to live holily, righteously, and godly in this present evil world; to obey the voice of the Lord his God, to be guided by His counsel, and to be governed by His will. These promises, which the profession of Christ involves, are not always kept, but frequently broken. They are broken in every case of conformity to the world; in every case of cold-heartedness and lukewarmness in the cause of Christ; in every case of open sin and transgression. Professors who thus act are as guilty of unfaithfulness to their word and vow, as were those who said to Jeremiah, "We will obey the voice of the Lord our God, to whom we send thee," instead of which, they followed the inclination of their own hearts, and acted in direct opposition to the Divine will. When professors of religion break their religious vows and promises, they but too plainly show the hollowness of their profession, and that their religion is only like unto "sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal."

Now there are promises which ought to be broken, rather than kept. Is it asked, And what are they? We reply, They are those which involve a transgression of law, or a violation of human rights. All *such* promises ought to be broken, and not kept. Nothing, not even a promise or an oath, can justify the transgression of a sacred law, or the violation of a human right; hence, if a promise be made, the fulfilment of which would be an infraction of

law or of right, such promise ought to be broken. The promise which Herod made to the daughter of Herodias ought to have been broken at once, when he found that its fulfilment involved the sacrifice of the life of a holy and innocent man. When this wicked woman, in her blood-thirstiness, asked for the head of John the Baptist, she left the king no alternative but to break his word, or behead the Baptist; and in that case he ought to have broken his word, rather than have shed the blood of this holy man of God. Life is more sacred than a wicked promise, and he who makes a promise, wicked in its character and cruel in its fulfilment, is bound by every law, human and divine, to break it. *He who fulfils a wicked promise breaks a holy law.*

Now, amid all the breaches of promise of which man is guilty, and they are many, how refreshing it is to think of promises which *cannot* be broken—the promises of a faithful God—promises which are firmer than the mountains, and more lasting than the hills; for “The mountains shall depart, and the hills shall be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be broken, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.” With God fidelity is blended with power, so that no word of His can by any possibility fall to the ground. “Hath He said, and shall He not do it? hath He spoken, and shall it not come to pass?”

“Firm as the earth His promise stands.”

Yes, and firmer, too; for “Heaven and earth shall

pass away, but the Word of our God shall stand for ever."

The fidelity of God should distinguish the whole family of God. The children should be like the Father in all things, especially in faithfulness and truth. Emulate then, O ye children of God—emulate the spirit of your Father which is in heaven, and, like Him, be faithful in all things. As by your profession of Christianity you have promised obedience, see to it that you obey the voice of the Lord your God, whether heard in the Law or in the Gospel, or whether it come to you in providence, or through some divinely-appointed prophet. Better, far better, never to have promised obedience, than to have made the promise, and afterwards to have broken it. Disobedience is sin; but the promise to obey, and then not to obey, is a *double* sin, and will meet with a heavier condemnation. Aim, then, as the children of God, to become obedient children; for "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

PROUD MEN.

JER. xliiii. 2: "The proud men."

"PRIDE goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." It was so in the case before us. The proud men, in the pride of their heart, would not believe the testimony of the prophet, which was the voice of God; they did not hesitate to tell the prophet that his testimony was false: "Thou speakest falsely; the Lord our God hath not sent thee to say, Go not into Egypt, to sojourn there." Disbelieving the testimony, they went into Egypt, instead of dwelling in the land of Judah, and there their pride and haughtiness received a just recompense of reward in the captivity and destruction which came upon them.

Proud men are distinguished for their disbelief of Divine testimony. Some of them believe not the record that God has given of creation, and in the pride of their heart tell us that geology is opposed to the Mosaic testimony, and that they will not believe Moses, but the modern geologist, whose theory they hold to be more rational than the history given by Moses, the man of God. Others believe not the record which God has given of miracles, and boldly declare they have no faith whatever in miracles; that miracles never were

wrought, and never will be; that God never did, and never will, depart from any of the great laws by which He now, and ever has, governed the universe of matter and of mind. Did these disbelievers in miracles ever ask themselves the question, How came the first man, and whence sprang the first woman? We ask not now *how* they were brought into existence. It is quite certain they were *not* brought into existence as men now are; consequently *God has departed* from that law, or mode of action, by which He created and brought into existence the first of the human race, and the first of every living creature that now exists. If God never departed from the law, or laws, by which He once worked, then every man and woman had been created in the same way as were the first; and every living creature—the fish of the sea, the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the field—had been brought into existence as were the first of every living thing. God, then, we repeat, *has departed* from laws on which He originally acted: *i.e.*, He has not made man *subsequently*, as He made him at the *first*; nor has He made any living creature subsequently, as He made it at the first; and if miracles, as all admit, are a departure from Nature's laws, as they now exist, then miracles have been wrought; for God, having made man in the first instance from the dust of the ground, and having made woman in the first instance from out of the man, has made all their posterity according to another law—the law of generation. Should, therefore, any disputer of miracles disbelieve the possi-

bility of miracles, and should he deny the first miracle of Jesus in Cana of Galilee on the ground of the impossibility of converting water into wine, we have simply to ask, Whether is easier, to make wine out of water, or man out of dust?

There are other proud men who disbelieve the entire scheme of salvation by Jesus Christ; they call Christianity a myth, and deem it no more worthy of credence than the mythology of Greece or Rome. The cross, which is the keystone of Christianity, is to them foolishness, and a stumbling-stone, a rock of offence; their proud hearts rebel against a doctrine so humiliating as that of salvation by grace, and grace alone, especially when told that this grace can only be obtained by faith in the Crucified One. More palatable to their taste, and more compatible with the pride of their hearts, would have been a doctrine of salvation by deeds of law or works of righteousness, and obtainable through faith in some *crowned* one, instead of faith in the *Crucified* One. Proud men are unwilling to admit their guilt; or, if that be admitted, they are unwilling to sue for mercy through the divinely-appointed channel. Hence they die without mercy, their pride issuing in their everlasting ruin.

Proud men not only dishonour God by disbelieving His testimony, and thus pave the way for their own destruction; they are accessories to the ruin of others. Other men too often endorse their scepticism, imbibe their views, copy their example; and thus following them, perish with them in all their guilt and folly; while all history testifies that the

pride of kings, emperors, and potentates has caused powerful nations to engage in sanguinary wars—wars which have turned many a cornfield into an “Aceldema, a field of blood,” and many a town into a “Golgotha, a place of skulls.” O cruel pride! which first curses its possessor, and then destroys the earth, with its hives of industry, its marts of commerce, its fields of plenty, and smites as with a plague-spot a whole people, filling the land with sighs, and moans, and tears. As we look on these terrible effects of pride, can we wonder that the proud should be an abomination in the sight of God; that He should resist them, and not suffer them to come near Him; that He should behold them afar off?

Pride being so hateful, so abominable in the sight of God, we are not surprised to find humility strongly inculcated and warmly approved—that He who inhabiteth eternity should promise to dwell with the humble—to give grace to the humble, and ultimately to crown him with honour, glory, immortality, eternal life. In proportion to His abomination of pride must be His approbation of humility. Humility was the garment in which Christ was arrayed when He came into the world to save sinners, and throughout the whole of His earthly career it marked His acts, and adorned His life. Such was His humility, that instead of taking upon Him the authority of a king, “He took upon Him the form of a servant,” and did not deem it beneath the dignity of His character to minister to the wants of the poor, and the feet of His disciples to wash. Such was His humility, blended with love profound,

that instead of dying in the midst of friends who would have smoothed His pillow, and wiped the death-sweat from His brow, "He endured the *cross*, and despised the shame." This beautiful garment, the glory, the adornment of the Lord Jesus, should be the glory, the adornment of all Christians. "Be ye clothed with humility," is counsel to which we do well to take heed. Thus attired, proud men may despise us ; but good men will esteem us, angels will look upon us with complacency, and God will bless us with His smiles, and crown us with His choicest favours. O for this beautiful garment ! a garment which never wears out, and the beauty of which never fades : a garment which angels wear, and in which the glorified spirits are attired. Let proud men beware how they despise this garment of humility. Without it they may occupy high places in the earth, and stand before kings ; but let them remember that their position in the next world will be one of degradation and sorrow, for God has purposed to stain the pride of all flesh, to abase the proud, and to exalt the humble. Yes, cries the prophet, "The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of man shall be brought low, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day."

HATEFUL THINGS.

JER. xliv. 4: "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate."

THE abominable thing here referred to is idolatry. Idolatry is a wicked, an abominable thing: it is treason against God—the dethronement of the Creator, and the enthronement of a creature. It is robbery—the robbing God of His glory, the glory due to His name. Idolatry is as irrational as it is wicked. Idiots cannot act more insanely than to pay homage and reverence to a piece of carved wood, or a graven image. God, in kindness to His people Israel, sent unto them His servants the prophets, and admonished them, saying, "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate."

But idolatry is not the only thing which God hates. There are other things which He hates as much as idolatry, *e.g.*, lying is an abominable thing, which God hates and abhors. So strong is His detestation of lying lips, that for this sin, Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, was struck with leprosy, and Ananias and his wife fell dead with a lie upon their tongue. And of all liars it is declared, "they shall have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." "Speak then every man truth with his neighbour."

Tell a lie to no man. Tell a lie for no object. Could you by deceit gain the whole world, it would profit you nothing. However strong the tendency, and however powerful the temptation to speak falsely, pause before you thus speak. God speaks to you, and says, "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate."

Another abominable thing which God hates is profane swearing, the utterance of awful oaths, and the pouring forth of obscene language. The throat of a profane swearer is like an open sepulchre, it sends forth a pestilential stench, offensive to God and man. Swearing shows a man to be a low fellow of the baser sort, for respectable men never swear. "Papa," said a little boy as he was walking with his father on Ramsgate harbour, "did not you hear that gentleman swear?" "No, my dear boy," said the father, "*gentlemen* never swear." Nor do they. The man who swears and blasphemes forfeits the character of a gentleman, and though he be worth his ten or twenty thousand a year, he is no gentleman. Profane swearing, while it shows a man to be no gentleman, also shows him to be no Christian: the habit is so foul, so hellish, that it shows a man to be a child of the devil; there could be no mistake in saying to profane swearers what our Lord said to certain wicked Jews, "Ye are of your father the devil, for the works of your father ye do."

But while idolatry, falsehood, and blasphemy, are abominable things which God hates, not less abominable and hateful in His sight is dishonesty.

To every child of man God has said, "Thou shalt not steal." Such is the sacredness of property in the sight of God, and such is His sore displeasure against the sin of theft, that He commanded Achan, the thief, to be put to death, while thieves are declared to have no inheritance in the kingdom of God and of Christ. "Let, therefore, him that stole steal no more." Should any man be tempted to take that which is not his own, let him resist the temptation. The law of man, and the law of God, alike prohibit the wicked deed, while God, speaking from heaven, says, "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate."

There is still another sin which is common in our land, and which God abominates and hates. We refer to the sin of inebriety. Drunkenness is a fourfold sin: it is a sin against self—the drunkard sins against his own body, undermines its health, and brings it to a premature grave; it is a sin against a man's own family—it creates sorrow and misery throughout the whole household; it is a sin against the country—it violates law, and does mischief to society; it is a sin against God—a setting at nought His counsel, a defiance of His authority. Drunkenness not only affects the body of a man, it acts most injuriously upon his mental powers. Under its influence the sane become insane, idiotic, less than men, lower than the brute, for no brute acts so insanely as the man under the influence of intoxicating drink. Should, therefore, a man be asked to join some Bacchanalian party, and to be "drunk with wine wherein is excess," let him decline

the invitation. God abhorring the sin, admonishes him, and says, "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate."

But notwithstanding this Divine prohibition, the abominable things which God hates have been constantly committed, and are being daily indulged in by multitudes of ungodly men. Deaf as an adder to the voice of God, men pursue their courses of iniquity, reckless of consequences; nor will they cease to do evil, and learn to do well, until the heart be changed by Divine grace, and they become "new creatures in Christ Jesus." Thus created anew, the idolater will cast away his idols, the liar will become truthful, the swearer chaste, the dishonest honest, the drunkard sober, and instead of doing abominable things which God hates, they will henceforth "do those things which are pleasing in His sight." As believers in Jesus, they will "add to their faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity." Thus attired in all these beautiful graces, they shine as lights in the midst of darkness. Upon them God looks with complacency, takes pleasure in them, rejoices over them, and promises that where He is there they shall be also.

But while, as a general rule, the soul born of God will do those things that are pleasing in His sight, yet it must be admitted that, under the powerful influence of temptation, the flesh has yielded to sin, and the things which God hates have

been committed by the child of God. Abraham committed an act of duplicity; David an act of adultery; Peter an act of blasphemy. But of these sins they bitterly repented; they mourned them before God, sought for forgiveness, and prayed to be washed from their sins and cleansed from their iniquity. Thus, strange as it may appear, the child of God abominates the abominable things he does, and hates the hateful sins he commits, showing that he possesses a twofold nature, called "the flesh and the spirit;" and so antagonistic are these the one to the other, that they are in perpetual conflict, the "flesh warring against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh." Of these two natures the spirit is the stronger, and should have the mastery over the flesh. God evidently regards the spirit as the more powerful combatant of the two in the conflict going on. He supposes the spirit to have power to resist the flesh, and calls upon it to offer resistance both to the flesh and the devil. When attacked by either, the command is, *Resist!* "Resist the devil," resist the flesh, and, "Oh, do not the abominable thing that I hate."

"With ready sword fight God's great battle here,
Win thou the field.

So round thy brow the wreath shall twine,
So shall the victory be thine,
And thine the song."

A WRONG CONCLUSION.

JER. xliv. 17: "For then had we plenty of bread, and were well, and saw no evil."

THERE is no doubt that there are times when the wicked prosper, and when ungodly men have all and more than heart could wish; and because of this prosperity of the wicked, and the abundance which the ungodly possess, it is too often thought that godliness is not profitable for the life that now is, whatever it may be for the life that is to come. This was the inference drawn by a certain class of idolaters in Egypt, who burnt incense unto the queen of heaven, and poured out drink offerings unto her, for, say they to the prophet, "Then had we plenty of bread, and were well, and saw no evil; but since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine." Thus they thought that, because they had more of this world's comforts when living in idolatry than they had when they renounced it, that idolatry was more advantageous than the worship of the true God.

But in coming to this conclusion they overlooked one very important fact, namely, that God does not enter into judgment with idolaters, nor with any other

class of sinners, *immediately*, but keeps back His anger and withholds His displeasure, to be manifested another day. Punishment does not immediately follow on transgression. Sin may be committed to-day, but punishment may not follow until many days hence. Sin may be committed, and at the time of its commission sinners may see no evil; but God's displeasure is kindled by it, and His anger, like a cloud, will one day burst upon them in all its desolating power. Months, and even years, may intervene between the sin and the punishment, but the day of retribution will assuredly come. Sin never goes unpunished, be that sin idolatry or any other violation of God's holy and righteous law.

The idolatrous Jews thought, that because they had plenty of bread, were well, and saw no evil at the time they were idolaters, and that since they had left off their idolatrous worship to the queen of heaven they had wanted all things, and had been consumed by the sword and the famine; that, therefore, idolatry was a thing that God winked at, and entailed no evil. But the prophet undeceived them, and pointed out to them that while during their idolatrous worship they had an abundance of all that they needed, and saw no evil, yet it was because of that very sin that they were now smarting under God's displeasure. "*Because*," he says, "ye have burned incense, and *because* ye have sinned against the Lord, that therefore this evil happened unto you as at *this day*." It is a mistake, therefore, to suppose, that because during the commission of sin there is no manifestation of the Divine displeasure, that God

is not displeased ; and that because during a course of iniquity there is no lack of the good things of this life, that iniquity is profitable. The fact is, God has determined that "though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished." Judgment may be deferred, punishment may be delayed, but the day of recompense will come, unless there be "repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ;" and then, according to the covenant of grace, God will say to transgressors, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions as a cloud, and will not remember thy sins."

Now, as with these idolatrous Jews, it were better for them, in a temporal point of view, when they lived in idolatry than when they abandoned it, so we are free to admit it has sometimes been better for the sinner, in a worldly sense, when he has lived in sin and transgression, than when he became converted by the grace of God, and took upon himself the profession of Christianity ; but then what is the loss of temporal good, compared with the great spiritual gains which follow on a man becoming a Christian ? In the days of our Lord, and in Apostolic times, the profession of Christianity involved the loss of all things ; but then such loss was more than made up by blessings of a higher order, and of a more permanent character. "There is no man," says our Lord, "that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive more in this present time, and in the world to come, life everlasting." Weighed in the balances, the gains of

Christianity, or a holy life, which is the same thing, far outweigh the losses occasioned by the giving up a life of idolatry and iniquity. Suppose, however, nothing were gained in this life; suppose it were, as the idolatrous Jews complained, that "since they left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, they had wanted all things, and had been consumed by the sword and by the famine;" what an ample compensation! what an infinite gain is that of everlasting life in the world to come!

But the compensation for losses sustained by a holy life is not wholly reserved for the world to come, for experience testifies to the fact that even in this world there is more gained than lost. If on a man becoming a holy man he lose the temporal, he gains the spiritual; if he lose "the bread which perisheth," he gains that "which endureth unto everlasting life;" if he lose the favour of men, he gains the favour of God; if he lose "the pleasures of sin," he gains the higher, the purer, and the more durable pleasures of holiness. Thus a holy life is emphatically a profitable life, whether viewed in relation to this world, or to that which is to come. Let not then good men, however great their privations and severe their sufferings, look back on their past life which was spent in sin, and in a tone of murmuring say, "Then had we plenty of bread, and were well, and saw no evil," as if the former days of their unregeneracy were better than these. Rather let them be grateful that, however poor they may be, they are rich in faith, and heirs of a kingdom, and that there is a sense in which, in the midst of their poverty,

"all things are theirs, things present, and things to come—life, death, glory, honour, immortality, eternal life." O man of God, look not back on the flesh pots of Egypt, gaze not with envious eye on the prosperity of the wicked. Of all people under heaven you are the most honoured, you have the greatest of all blessings, the brightest of all prospects. "Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord?" Wherever you may be, whether in a peasant's cottage, a pauper's dwelling, or a felon's prison, "Speak to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts unto the Lord." Say—

"The sorrows of the mind
Be banished from this place."

Tell all around you that—

"The hill of Zion yields
A thousand sacred sweets,
Before you reach the heavenly fields,
Or walk the golden streets."

Keep up the spirit of song, be jubilant, and to your comrades say—

"Come, let our songs abound,
And every tear be dry;
We are marching through Immanuel's ground,
To fairer worlds on high."

DIVINE DISPLEASURE.

JER. xliv. 27: "Behold, I will watch over them for evil, and not for good; and all the men of Judah that are in the land of Egypt shall be consumed by the sword and by the famine, until there be an end of them."

GOD is no respecter of persons. He respects not the rich more than the poor, princes more than peasants, kings more than people. These petty distinctions among men are of no account in His sight; they are but the outward badges of a mortal life, and have nought whatever to do with the value and worth of a man; indeed, the poor may be better than the rich, the peasant better than the prince, the people better than the ruler that reigns over them—better, we mean, in all that is excellent in character, and noble in action.

But while God is no respecter of persons, He is a respecter of character. Character attracts the notice of His eye. "The eyes of the Lord are over the *righteous*." Character calls forth the love of His heart. "The Lord loveth the *righteous*." Character when bad incurs His anger. "God is angry with the wicked every day." The love which He has for the righteous leads Him to watch over them for good, and not for evil. The anger He feels towards the wicked, leads Him to watch over them

for evil, and not for good. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God." And when we look at the fall of wicked empires, and the overthrow of corrupt dynasties; when we see godless families become extinct, and the workers of iniquity brought to ruin, we cannot resist the conclusion that all things work together for evil to them that love not God; to them who trample under foot His laws, and live as if there were no God to obey, and no future to dread or hope for.

How little do men think, that in all their doings and misdoings, God is watching over them for evil or for good. When Israel were in Egypt, groaning under the oppression of Pharaoh, God watched over them for good, and brought them out with a high hand and an outstretched arm, drowning the Egyptians in the very sea which afforded them a safe passage; but when the men of Judah were in Egypt, participating in the idolatry of that wicked land, God watched over them for evil, and declared that, "All the men of Judah in the land of Egypt should be consumed by the sword, and by the famine, until there was an end of them." "Verily there is a God that ruleth in the earth," and so ruleth as to bring evil upon evil-doers, and good upon them that do good, that love Him and keep His commandments.

But if God watches over the wicked for evil, and over the righteous for good, how comes it to pass, it may be asked, that oftentimes the wicked prosper, and have more than heart can wish, while the righteous have to struggle with adversity and want? We

reply, Life is not always the time when the pleasure and displeasure of God are manifested. "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment, and some men they follow after. Likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand, and they that are otherwise cannot be hid." Here we see that God visits some men's sins in this life, and others in the life to come; and in like manner God blesses with His favour the good works of some in the life that now is, while the good works of others cannot be hid, but will not be made manifest, and blessed with His approving smile, until the great day of assize, when He will publicly proclaim, "I was hungry and ye fed me, I was thirsty and ye gave me drink." We remember to have read a somewhat amusing conversation, which is said to have taken place in America, between a godless farmer and a man of God. The godless farmer had reaped and gathered in his harvest exceedingly well, working on Sundays, as well as the other six days of the week, for that purpose. The man of God reproved him for working on the Sabbath, and reminded him that such conduct could not be otherwise than displeasing in the sight of God. "As for that," said the farmer, "I don't see when *Michaelmas* comes but what I am quite as well off, and perhaps a little better, than those who 'Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.'" "That may be," replied the man of God, "but then you must remember God does not always settle His accounts with men at *Michaelmas*." Pertinent as was this reply, it contains a truth

which is too often lost sight of—namely, that God will settle His account with every man at some one time or other. Inspiration lifts up her voice, and declares that, “Every man must give an account of himself to God.”

“Behold, I will watch over them for evil,” saith the Lord. The day of evil may be deferred, “God is longsuffering to us ward,” but it will assuredly come. Wicked men are those, “whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.” It may seem to linger and to slumber, but it does neither; it comes with firm and steady step, and will overtake them, unless they repent and believe the Gospel. “Behold, *now* is the accepted time; *now* is the day of salvation.” It is *now* or *never*. The ship has struck on the Goodwin, the sea is breaking over her, the life-boat has put off to the rescue, and is now alongside: “Jump, men, jump!” is the cry of the boatmen, anxious to save the lives of the perishing crew. This is our cry to sinners. We bid them cast themselves into the arms of Jesus, as into a life-boat; we tell them there is no time to lose; another wave breaking over them, and they may go down to the deep, and be lost, for ever lost. Again we cry, “Now is the day of salvation.” Escape for your life. Christ is the sinner’s life-boat. All that are in Him are safe; they will reach the harbour or the shore—the land where the wind never howls, the sea never roars, and the sun never sets.

What a mercy to be thus safe for such a land. As the believer nears the shore to

which the life-boat is carrying him, we hear him say :—

“ I go to life, and not to death,
From darkness to life's native sky ;
I go from sickness and from pain,
To health and immortality.”

I go where I shall be for ever present with the Lord, whose eyes will watch over me for ever and ever, for *good*, and not for *evil*.

A DEFEATED ARMY.

JER. xlv. 15: "Why are thy valiant men swept away? they stood not, because the Lord did drive them."

THERE is an unseen Power greater than any that is seen, and upon this unseen Power depends the issue of battles. "Why are thy valiant men swept away?" Not because they were badly commanded; not because they were untrained men, unskilled in the art of war; not because their weapons were defective and their ammunition gone. No. "They stood not, because the Lord did drive them." The unseen Power was arrayed against these valiants in battle, so that their valour was of no avail, neither did their strategy and tact give them the victory. In all battles it is God who gives the victory, and the weakest army that ever took the field may triumphantly ask, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

Look at the late war between France and Prussia. In less than two months from the declaration of war by France she lost the prime of her army, and Paris, her proud capital, was besieged and surrounded by the hostile forces of Prussia, which she had challenged to the war, nor was the siege raised until the city capitulated and laid down her arms at the conqueror's feet. Had France—van-

quished and trodden down, her great forts taken, and her army defeated in all the battles she fought—had she been asked, "Why are thy valiant men swept away?" Some would have said, and, indeed, some did say, it was because of bad generalship; but from the Sacred Oracle we hear another and a sounder reason assigned, "They stood not, because the Lord did drive them."

That the Lord was on the side of Prussia in her war with France, cannot, we think, for a moment be doubted; and here we record a fact which must not be overlooked as trivial and unimportant, namely, that before the war began, Prussia, by a day of humiliation and prayer, sought aid from above, after which the whole army went forth to defend the Fatherland, looking to and trusting in God, whose aid they had invoked to give them the victory. And who can look at the strategy of a Moltke, and the statesmanship of a Bismarck, the tact of generals, and the heroism of the soldiers, without seeing that the Lord was on their side, giving wisdom to the strategist, counsel to the statesman, and skill and daring to generals, officers, and men. When the war was over, Prussia, in grateful acknowledgment of the Divine help vouchsafed, might have chanted in all the churches throughout the land the 124th Psalm, and, to the praise and glory of God, have humbly confessed, "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side when men rose up against us, then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us;" but the Lord being on their side, instead of being swallowed up, they swal-

lowed up their enemies, who were given as a prey to their teeth.

Now, as "power belongeth unto God," it is the highest wisdom, to say nothing of duty, to seek His aid in all that we undertake, for, with Omnipotence on our side, the result cannot be doubtful. That is the wisest nation which, on the eve of war, bowing before the mercy-seat, cries, "Wilt not thou go forth with our armies?" And he is the wisest man who never enters upon any enterprise, be it secular or religious, without going into his closet, there to invoke Divine aid, and to seek the Divine blessing. If wisdom consists in the adaptation of means to the end, then there must be consummate wisdom in seeking the aid of God, because when such aid is sought and obtained, the end can never fail of being accomplished, for with God nothing is impossible. "He can do exceedingly abundantly beyond all we can ask or think."

We confess we like to see valiant men—men valiant for the truth, valiant for rights, civil and religious, and if God be with them, they will not be swept away; they will stand their ground, they will do more, they will go on from conquering to conquer. But if valiant men forget God, if they trust to their valour, or rely upon their own strength, if they confide in the superiority of their weapons, and think their own sword is to save them, then we may have to ask the question, "Why are those valiant men swept away?" And the answer will be, "They stood not, because the Lord did drive them."

The Lord our God is a jealous God, and whenever He sees a people trusting in their own strength, or in weapons of human warfare, instead of putting their trust in Him—angry at such folly, and jealous of His own glory, He drives them before the enemy, and withholds from them the victory. Many a proud army, valiant in fight, has been swept away, driven as chaff before the wind, and many a proud and wicked man has suffered the same fate. "Pride goeth before destruction," destruction follows in its wake, "and a haughty spirit before a fall"—a fall from which the haughty spirit seldom rises. Humility is safety. God dwells with the humble, "He giveth grace to the humble;" and thus blessed with the Divine presence, and strengthened by Divine grace, the humble never fall, they stand, "kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation."

Humility is better than valour, because it secures that which is of infinitely greater importance—it secures the power of God, and when this is secured, "one may chase a thousand, and two may put ten thousand to flight." Valour, blended with humility, is "mighty through God," and will accomplish wonders. Valour, without humility, is powerless, and will accomplish nothing.

This beautiful combination of valour and humility was to be seen in our great Reformers, our Luthers and Melancthons, and they worked marvels in their day. The same combination was to be seen in our first missionaries, our Careys and Marshmans, our Williams and Moffats, our Morrisons and Milnes, and they accomplished great things in the

lands whither they went. Valour and humility have marked the conduct of great men in every age, and by them the noblest and grandest triumphs in science, philanthropy, and religion have been achieved. Valour in the cause of truth is a duty enjoined by the highest authority ; the command is, " Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." And the same authority inculcates humility, as the uniform to be worn by every soldier of the cross : " Be ye clothed with humility." Acting under these instructions, let us give battle to the foe, fight the good fight, and, if need be, " endure hardness, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ." The conflict with the enemy may be long, but the day will dawn when every foe shall be slain, and the last enemy shall be destroyed ; and then shall go up from the conquering hosts of Immanuel the shout of joy and triumph, " Thanks be unto God, who hath given us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." And from the throne of God there shall come forth the plaudit—

" Soldiers of Christ, well done,
Rest, for the conflict's o'er ;
The battle's fought, the victory's won,
And there shall be war no more."

GOD THE ONLY OBJECT OF PRAISE.

JER. xlviii. 2: "There shall be no more praise of Moab."

PRAISE offered to men, or given to nations, what is it like? It is like the sound of a trumpet, which waxes louder and louder, and then dies away in everlasting silence; it is like a vapour, vanishing as it refines; it is like the fragrance of a flower, which, however sweet, soon passes away. Human praise is of short duration; a time comes when it shall be said, "There shall be no more praise of Moab," be that Moab a nation or a man.

Not only is human praise of short duration—it is a question whether it ought in any case to be given to a nation or to men. We confess we are at a loss to conceive of a nation, however great, or an individual, however distinguished, deserving of praise. Why should praise be given to a nation for its greatness, when that greatness is the result of the development of natural resources, or of administrative power given to it of God? for what has a nation in wealth, intelligence, and territory, but what it has received? And why should praise be ascribed to a man of genius or benevolence, when his genius is a Divine endowment, and his benevolence a Divine implantation? All real greatness in

nations, and all real goodness in men, are both the gifts of God—the result of His sovereign will and pleasure; hence praise is due *only* to God.

Shall we praise the mighty Alps because, in their greatness, they reach unto the clouds? Shall we praise the noble eagle because, in her fondness for her young, she bears them on her wings and covers them with her feathers? We praise them not. The mighty Alps are what they are by the creative power of God, and the noble eagle is what she is by the instinct which God has given to her. Praise therefore must be given to God, and not to man—to the Creator, and not to the creature. Mighty nations are but Alps of God's creation, and great men are but eagles of God's making, for "Of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things, to whom be glory for ever and ever."

Let but this simple fact be distinctly recognised, and "there shall be no more praise of Moab," but *all* praise shall be given to Him from whom *all* blessings flow. One might sometimes suppose that the doxology we so often sing was a mistake—that it contained a fundamental error—that *all* blessings did not flow from God, but that some of them came from man as an independent source, for praise is sometimes divided between God and man, and man sometimes gets the larger share, as if he were the greater benefactor of the two, and more blessings flowed from him than from God. But the doxology is no mistake, it contains no error, it is indisputably true that *all* blessings flow from God; hence *all* praise should be rendered to Him, the

Author and Giver of *every* good and *every* perfect gift.

Divinely-inspired, heaven-taught men never fail to trace the favours their fellow-men confer, up to their Divine source. Does Joseph obtain favour of Pharaoh? It is acknowledged that "*God* gave him this favour." Is Daniel a favourite with an officer in the court of Babylon? It is said, "Now *God* had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs." Is the Church at Corinth earnestly cared for by Titus? Paul thanks *God* for putting that care into the heart of Titus for them. This is as it should be; God should be acknowledged in all things, to the praise of the glory of His grace. Every river has its source, whether it be the Avon or the Thames, the Niger or the Nile, and so has every blessing, and that source is God. Let this undeniable fact be gratefully acknowledged, that so there may be no more praise of Moab, but of God, and God alone. The resolve of every man should be, "I will praise *Thee*, O Lord, with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright and in the congregation."

As the praise of God is the Christian's sweetest employ, it is consolatory to know that to it there will be no end. "There shall be no more praise of Moab;" but neither in time, nor in eternity, will it ever be said, There shall be no more praise of God.

"Praise shall employ my noblest powers,
 Whilst immortality endures;
 My days of praise shall ne'er be past,
 While life or breath or being last."

Death may silence the tongue of the body, but death cannot silence the tongue of the soul. Death touches no power of the soul, it only gives to it its complete liberation from the bondage of corruption, so that it flies away and passes into the heavens, to perpetuate the praises of God there. Cowper well knew that death had no power over the tongue of the soul—that it did not silence that for one moment; and in the full belief of this scriptural truth, he wrote that beautiful hymn on “the fountain filled with blood,” and in the last verse sweetly says,—

“ And when this lisping, stammering tongue
Lies silent in the grave,
Then in a nobler, sweeter song,
I'll sing Thy power to save.”

Thus praise will be perpetuated, and the song of heaven will be nobler and sweeter than that of earth: nobler, because sung by spirits ennobled by loftier views of God, and the Lamb; and sweeter, because poured forth from sweeter, purer hearts— hearts made pure from every sin, and cleansed from all defilement. Believers, in the contemplation of their removal from earth to heaven, anticipate with pleasure their union with “the spirits of the just made perfect,” and their participation with them in the homage and adoration there paid to the Lord Jesus; hence, with dying breath, you may hear them say—

“ Oh that with yonder sacred throng;
We at His feet may fall;
We'll join the everlasting song,
And crown Him Lord of all.”


"There shall be no more praise of Moab," but the praises of Jesus shall be for ever and ever. As He loved us *from* everlasting, so we shall praise Him *to* everlasting. His everlasting love will call forth an everlasting song. His love was without beginning, and our praises will be without end. Glorious destiny this! An eternity of praise can be nothing less than an eternity of bliss. This is the portion of angels, and this the heritage of saints.

INDIFFERENCE TO ETERNAL REALITIES.

JER. xlviii. 11 : " Moab hath been at ease from his youth."

THIS, alas ! is true of many a man now in the prime of life, or in the decay of old age. Look at the nobleman. Born in affluence, cradled in luxury, educated in the highest schools of the land, blessed with wealth which has freed him from all the cares of business or professional life, he has " been at ease from his youth." Not only has he had no concern about things temporal ; he has been equally indifferent to things eternal. The language of his whole life has been, " Soul, take thine ease ; eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundantly."

Would that this Moab-like ease were confined to the upper classes of society ; but it is not so. Multitudes of men of business, mechanics, and the lower grades of society, however troubled they may have been in relation to the things of this life, have " been at ease from their youth," touching the things which pertain to the life to come. Lulled as into a profound sleep, or conscience seared as with a hot iron, they have paid no attention whatever to the things which make for their everlasting peace. All



the solemn and momentous truths of Revelation they have treated as fiction, and not fact; and the whole scheme of the Gospel they have practically regarded as a "cunningly devised fable," instead of looking at it in its true light, as "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God."

How deplorably sad to see men at ease in the condition in which sin has placed them, and the Gospel finds them! And what is that condition? It is one of guilt and condemnation. Inspiration declares their guilt, and pronounces their condemnation. Looking into the sacred page, we read that "the whole world is guilty before God;" and we hear it declared, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." This is the condition in which the Gospel finds men, and proclaims to them a free pardon—the full remission of all their sins—on the ground of faith, or dependence on the Lord Jesus Christ. And moreover, this Gospel which proclaims remission of sins through faith in Christ, declares that, in the event of faith not being exercised in the Lord Jesus, the guilt of the sinner is uncanceled, and the law must take its course. "He that believeth not is condemned *already*," and "the wrath of God *abideth* on him."

Here, then, is man, guilty and condemned, *before* the Gospel comes to him; and this guilt is increased, and this condemnation augmented, when the Gospel does come, if when it comes it is despised and rejected; and yet he is at ease, and, like Moab, has "been at ease from his youth." How can we account for such apathy, such indifference under circum-

stances so serious, so awful, so appalling? Surely some Satanic influence must be exerted on the mind and heart of a man who can sing and be merry in a state of condemnation, with the sentence of death to be executed upon him. Paul recognised such an influence when, in writing to the Corinthians, he said, "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not."

Blindness, then, the result of Satanic influence, is the cause of that ease and unconcern which, from their youth up, men display. To have no concern about one's safety when danger is seen, or death is approaching, is unnatural. Danger *seen*, or death *apprehended*, destroys all thoughtless ease and stoical indifference; hence upon no other rational ground can we account for man's total unconcern about his danger, and the death that awaits him, than that assigned by the Apostle Paul—the blindness of the human mind. And we know that when this blindness is removed by the power of God, when He who called light out of darkness shines into the human mind, then the real danger of man as a sinner is seen, and no sooner is it seen than there goes forth the instinctive cry, "What must I do to be saved?" "Moab has been at ease from his youth;" but as soon as his mind is illumined by God, ease gives place to anxiety, stolid indifference to deep concern, and no solid peace can he find until brought to Jesus. Believing in Him, peace is found, peace is established between him and

God, the offender and the offended ; peace is realized in the conscience—a peace that passeth all understanding, solid, substantial, abiding.

This peace, which is the fruit of faith, is a very different thing from that ease and unconcern in which the sinner had been from his youth up. The peace he has found through believing makes him anxious about the state of his own soul, and concerned for the welfare of others. Moab, when aroused out of his ease, never lapses into the same state again ; he has peace, but he is never at ease as before ; his Sabbaths are not spent as before, in ease and idleness, but in the sanctuary of God ; his tongue is not silent as before, but is vocal with earnest prayer and grateful song : instead of indifference to the claims of the Gospel as before, he now gives of his substance for its support, and offers prayer for its promulgation. Activity in the service of God and of Christ has taken the place of inactivity ; for whereas he did nothing for the cause of God and the welfare of his fellow-men, he is now employed in every good word and work, “ fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.”

It is to be observed that this ease and unconcern in relation to Divine things and spiritual realities is not only to be seen *outside* the pale of every Christian community, but may be witnessed within the precincts of every section of the Church of Christ. Multitudes are as much at ease under the sound of the Gospel, as those who never enter the sanctuary of our God. From the pulpit the call is made, “ Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from

the dead, and Christ shall give thee light;" but they sleep on, and remain in their death-like torpor. The warning is now given, "Flee from the wrath to come;" but they take no heed whatever to the warning, but treat it as a false alarm. The invitation is now presented, "Come to Jesus;" come, and He will in nowise cast out; but no notice is taken of this gracious invite, as though it were utterly unworthy of acceptance. Upon such thoughtless, careless, heedless ones, God looks with anger, and as a predict of their doom says, "Woe to them that are at ease in *Zion*." It is bad enough to be at ease *out* of Zion; it is far worse to be at ease *in* Zion; for God is in Zion, and in the person of His ministers speaks to men in the language of warning, entreaty, and invitation. "Now, then," says Paul, "we are ambassadors for Christ, as though *God* did beseech you by us; we pray you, in *Christ's stead*, be ye reconciled to God." Would that men, in listening to the ministry of reconciliation, did but remember that the appeal made to them is as much Divine as if God spoke to them from heaven, or Christ addressed them from the pulpit. The message of an ambassador is the message of the sovereign who sends him; consequently, the reception or rejection of the message is the reception or rejection, not of the ambassador, but of the king whose servant he is. Surely, if the attendants on a gospel ministry had but borne this fact in mind, they had not, like Moab, "been at ease from their youth." Surely, they had listened with marked attention and deep anxiety

to the word spoken, had they believed it was the word not of man, but of God. When *God* speaks, men should hear, and God does speak in the ministry of the word; but if men will not hear, if they still continue to remain at ease *in* Zion and *out* of Zion, then a time will come when God will say to them, "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh, when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me." Here we see the law of retribution. God called to them, and they gave no heed; now they call upon Him, but He gives them no answer. The day of grace is past—the door of mercy is shut; and now God deals with them after their sins, and rewards them according to their iniquities.

Oh ye! who, like Moab, have been at ease from your youth, bestir yourselves, consider your ways; rouse yourselves from your torpor, hearken to the voice of God. He calls you to flee for your life. "Flee then from the wrath to come." He bids you look to Jesus. "Look, then, to Him, and be saved." He beseeches you to be reconciled. Throw down, then, the weapons of your hostility, and "be ye reconciled to God." Why should you remain at ease in the midst of danger? Why cry peace,

peace, when sudden destruction is coming upon you ?
 The storm is gathering. *Up, up*, from thy slumbers.
 Hasten to the Divinely-appointed refuge, Christ
 Jesus ; " He is as an hiding-place from the wind,
 and a covert from the tempest." Delay no longer.
 Make no tarrying. Death may not be far off.
 Death !—

" How shocking must thy summons be, O death,
 To him that is at ease in his possessions ,
 Who, counting on long years of pleasure here,
 Is quite unfurnished for that world to come."

But how blessed must thy summons be, O death !
 to him who, instead of having lived in Moab-like
 ease, has lived a life of Pauline activity ; and who,
 like that great Apostle, can say, " For me to live is
 Christ, and to die is gain."

FATHERLESS AND WIDOWS.

JER. xlix. 11: "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me."

PARENTAL affection is strong; it is a powerful instinct, which God has implanted in the nature of man—an instinct which is both a pleasure to the parent, and a blessing to the offspring. Parental affection is parental bliss. A father never feels happier than when his heart coils round his children, and when, with true affection, he embraces them, kisses them, and calls them his "*dear ones*;" while this affection, this instinct of his nature, so pleasurable to himself in its outgoings, secures for his children all that he has it in his power to give, or in his possession to bequeath. In the implantation of this instinct in the nature of man, we cannot fail to see the lovingkindness of God. By thus endowing man God has kindly, lovingly consulted the happiness of the parent and the welfare of his children; for without natural affection, the parent had been without joy, and his offspring without care.

This parental affection, strong in most men, is strongest in the heart of the Christian. Christianity intensifies the instinct, and, if one may so speak, widens its scope and increases its solicitude. Chris-

tianity leads the parent to look upon his children in relation to *two* worlds, and as having a *twofold* interest to secure—a temporal and an eternal. The man of the world, however strong his affection for his family, looks at them only in relation to this life, and as having only worldly interests to secure: hence the parental affection of the Christian is wider in its range, contemplating, as it does, the temporal and the eternal welfare of his children, whilst, with true fatherly love he seeks, by every possible means, to secure for every child of his, prosperity in this world, and in the world to come life everlasting.

The man of the world thinks he has done his duty towards his children when he feeds, clothes, educates them, and, placing them out in some business or profession, gives them what he calls a fair start in life. Not so the Christian; when he has done all this for his children he does not for a moment suppose he has done all that duty demands, or affection requires. The one parent looks upon his children as *mortals*; the other as *immortals*, destined for an unending existence, and with a deep conviction of their immortality, and a consciousness that they are sinful, and need a Saviour, he ceases not to make mention of them in his prayers, and with holy fervour pleads with God on their behalf. Fraternal affection prompted Paul to say to his brethren, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they may be saved." Parental affection leads the Christian to express the same desire, and to offer the same prayer for the salvation of his children. Which, then, we ask, is the

- better father of the two—the Christian, or the anti-Christian? the man of the world, or the man of God? the father who seeks only the temporal interests of his family, or the father who seeks *both* the temporal and the eternal? We leave this question for the conscience of every man to decide.

Parental affection, enlarged and intensified by vital Christianity, is never perhaps stronger than when death is approaching. The Christian parent then feels intense affection for his family, and in some cases there is a deep anxiety relative to their future welfare. As the dying man looks upon his children, whom he is about to leave fatherless, and his wife a widow, sorrow fills his heart; he is not afraid to die, he knows whom he has believed, and is assured that “to die is gain;” but he sighs and is sorrowful because his children will be left without a father’s counsels, and a father’s prayers, and because his wife will be a widow, with no arm on which to lean, and no helper in whom to trust. And now it is that God speaks to him, and in tones of lovingkindness says to him, “Let not your heart be troubled.” “Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widow trust in me.”

Many a dying husband and parent, in the belief that this gracious promise would be graciously fulfilled, has had all his anxiety removed, and has calmly said: “I can now leave all with God; I believe God will take care of my children, and provide for my widow; I have now no wish to live longer, I am ready to depart; come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.” Presently Jesus comes and takes His servant home; and

the man of God departs, leaving his fatherless children with God, and his widow to His kind and gracious care.

It is deeply interesting to observe how remarkably widows and orphans are preserved and provided for, how their every want is met, and their every need supplied. And this providential care of widows and fatherless ones, God has shown in all ages. Go we back as far as the time of David, we hear him saying, "I have been young, and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." Come we down to the Christian era and apostolic times, we find our Lord compassionating widows, and the apostolic churches making special provision for the wants of widows. There was doubtless a special fund for their benefit, from which their daily wants were supplied, inasmuch as we find the Grecians complained that "their widows were neglected in the *daily* ministration." Besides this special church fund for the benefit of widows, there was a Dorcas who, touched with pity for widows and orphans, made garments for them, and thus supplied their need and contributed to their comfort.

In the present day we see the same providential care of God for these bereaved ones in the efforts put forth on their behalf. Who can visit Müller's Orphanage at Bristol, and Spurgeon's Orphanage in London—who can look at the many almshouses and asylums which deck and adorn our land, and which have been built for the sole benefit of widows and orphans—without being struck with God's care for them, and without seeing beautiful illustrations of

His faithfulness in the fulfilment of this great and precious promise, "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive, and let thy widows trust in Me"? for while a man of the world would trace these institutions to no higher source than the philanthropic spirit of the age, a man of God would not stop there, he would seek for the cause of that philanthropy, and would find it in Him whom inspiration declares to be the "Giver of every good and perfect gift." As the light of the moon is only the reflected light of the sun, so man's care of the fatherless and widow is only the reflected care of God for these bereaved children of men. We hold it therefore as a truth not to be denied, that all the provision made to meet the necessities of widows and orphans has God for its Author. It is He who disposes the hearts of men to pity and compassionate the sons and daughters of need, and in the aid received by the fatherless and widows, they should look from the stream to the Fountain, and gratefully acknowledge the hand of God, and say, "We will sing unto the Lord, because He hath dealt bountifully with us."

PARDON.

JER. l. 20: "I will pardon them whom I reserve."

PARDON in some cases would be an unrighteous and dangerous thing. Pardon the burglar and the murderer, and whose house would be safe, and whose life would be secure? while the unrighteousness of the act would call forth the voice of public indignation. Pardon in other cases would be both a righteous and a safe thing; it is so when given in consideration of the law being honoured, and accompanied by an influence which makes the transgressor a good man, and a lover of the law he has broken. Now, God *alone* can give a pardon to the guilty that is both righteous and safe, and that because His law has been duly honoured by Christ, and because with the pardon bestowed there goes forth an influence which makes the pardoned ones new creatures, loyal subjects, and devoted servants of the Most High God. Thus, what would be unrighteous and unsafe for civil governments to do, is righteous and safe for God to do, namely, to "pardon iniquity, transgression and sin."

"The powers that be are ordained of God" for the punishment of evil doers, not for their pardon. The duty of magistrates is the administration of justice; and in the discharge of this duty, pardon is ex-

cluded ; it is altogether out of their province ; for to pardon evil-doers, instead of punishing them, would be to neglect their duty, and to turn their judgment-seat into a mercy-seat, in defiance of the law they were bound to maintain and to carry out. If magistracy were to undertake to pardon transgression, grace would reign through *unrighteousness* unto anarchy and peril. When God undertakes to pardon, "grace reigns through *righteousness* unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." Mark the contrast, and in it see how glorious is the pardon the Gospel proclaims—the glory that invests it is righteousness, and the glory that follows it is life eternal.

The pardon which God bestows, and which, as we have seen, comes through righteousness and is followed by a glorious future, is sovereign in its exercise. Scripture tells us nothing of universal pardon, but it does tell us of the pardon of some: "I will pardon them whom I reserve." And it contains this sovereign declaration of God—"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." Thus the sovereignty of pardon is Divinely affirmed ; but if we had no Divine affirmation on the subject, reason alone would teach us that as pardon is an act of grace, it must be a sovereign act, and when bestowed, must be bestowed according to the good pleasure of His will.

But while the sovereignty of pardon is obvious, both from the testimony of Scripture, and human reason, the universality of its offer is equally clear. The preaching of the Gospel to every creature is

nothing less than the proclamation of pardon to every creature, on the ground of "repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." This universality of the offer of pardon does not destroy its sovereignty, for the offer itself is an act of sovereignty, while the actual bestowment of pardon is only a further development of the good pleasure of His will.

God in His sovereignty having made a general proclamation of pardon, and having made its bestowment dependent on the sinner's repentance and faith, throws the *onus* of responsibility on the unpardoned, and says, "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life;" which is virtually saying, Ye will not repent and believe the Gospel. Verily I say unto you, "Except ye repent ye shall perish," and "He that believeth not shall be condemned." Thus the fault of not obtaining pardon is man's own, while the praise of having obtained it must be ascribed to God, by whose grace the scheme of pardon was first framed, then proclaimed, and then bestowed on all who repent and believe the Gospel. And lest the recipients of pardon should boast that they have repented and believed, while others have not, they are reminded that repentance is a *grant*, and faith is a *gift*. See Acts v. 31, xi. 18; Ephes. ii. 8.

Where is boasting then? It is excluded, seeing that the very conditions of pardon, to which men by nature refuse to submit, they comply with, only as the result of Divine influence granting them repentance, and giving them faith. It is impossible, therefore, we think, to come to any other conclusion

than that condemnation is an act of justice, and salvation an act of grace. To the unpardoned it may be said, By justice ye are condemned; even as it is said to the pardoned, "By grace ye are saved." "Hell is justice; heaven is grace; earth is God's longsuffering."

But while pardon is necessarily a sovereign act of God, no man, however wicked, need despair of obtaining it. Though his sins be of the deepest dye, as scarlet or as crimson, there is hope even for him. Let such an one only "return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, and He will abundantly pardon." There are no difficulties in the way. God, unlike any other judicial authority, is *able* to pardon, seeing that in the death of Christ for sin, law is honoured and magnified. And is He not as willing as He is able? From within the veil, whither the Fore-runner has for us entered, I hear a voice from the multitude which cluster around His throne, saying :

"He is able, He is willing,
Doubt no more."

Why should you doubt, when He pardoned a Manasseh, a Magdalene, a Saul? Why should you doubt, when He pardoned a blasphemer, a malefactor, a murderer? Why should you doubt, when publicans and harlots were pardoned and received into the kingdom of heaven? Why should you doubt, when "all manner of sin and blasphemy can be forgiven," save one sin which cannot be laid to your charge? Why should you

doubt, when "the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin," and Jesus Himself says to you, "Come unto me," and "him that cometh I will in no wise cast out" ?

To doubt of obtaining pardon, or of finding mercy, amid such examples of mercy, is to sin against reason, revelation, and God ; for with such examples of pardon sought, and mercy found, reason, revelation, and God Himself, all testify to the possibility of pardon being obtained, however great the guilt, and however multiplied the transgressions. Add not then to your guilt by doubting the willingness of God to pardon, but believe. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," in the efficacy of His blood, and the sufficiency of His righteousness. Believe, and thou shalt be saved. Believe not, and condemnation awaits you. So taught Christ, the Great Teacher, the Infallible, whose declarations are decisions never to be set aside, but which will be carried out in all their solemn meaning and eternal significance.

RECOMPENCES.

JER. li. 56: "The Lord God of recompences shall surely requite."

"VENGEANCE is mine. I will repay, saith the Lord."
"Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."
O Lord God, "With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful, with an upright man thou wilt show thyself upright, with the pure thou wilt show thyself pure, and with the froward thou wilt show thyself froward." "The Lord God of recompences shall surely requite." All history—from Adam to Moses, from Moses to Christ, and from Christ to the present day—illustrates and establishes the fact now under consideration. There is not an evil that has been committed but a recompence has followed. There is not a good that has been done, but what has been recompensed either in this life or in that which follows.

The sin of Adam, the sin of Cain, the sin of Sodom, the sin of the world, were all recompensed. Adam was driven from Eden; Cain became "a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth;" Sodom was overthrown; and the world was drowned: whilst every judgment which has subsequently come upon the world has been "a just recompence of reward." But whilst God recompenses evil, He never fails to

reward the good. "He is not unmindful, to forget works of faith, and labours of love." Even a cup of cold water He declares shall not lose its reward; and what a noble recompence awaits all the real followers of the Lord Jesus! When placed at His right hand, He will publicly own their deeds of beneficence, and say to them, "I was hungry and ye fed me, I was thirsty and ye gave me drink," and then welcome them to the "kingdom prepared for them from before the foundation of the world."

The requiting of men for evil deeds and good works, may often be seen in the operation of the laws of our physical and mental being. God has so constituted us as that evil shall be productive of evil, and good productive of good, and thus without any direct expression of anger on the one hand, or approbation on the other, the Lord God is seen to be a God of recompences. By the very laws of our nature the drunkard is recompensed by loss of reason; the libertine by the loss of health; the robber by the loss of peace; the murderer by the loss of every vestige of joy and gladness. These are the *natural* recompences which flow from the operation of nature's laws, and have nought to do with those which law demands, and which God by His judgments inflicts. So by the same laws of our being, the kind, the compassionate, the generous, the faithful, the zealous, the self-denying, are recompensed by a joy, a peace, a satisfaction, a pleasure, which are felt to be in very deed "great recompense of reward."

But whilst there is a natural recompense of re-

ward, both to those that do evil, and to those that do good, there still remains the judicial recompense, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give unto every man, for Revelation declares, "He will render to every man according to his deeds." Deeds of wickedness, deeds of righteousness, deeds of kindness, will all be recompensed: wickedness by the frown of His anger, accompanied by the sentence, "Depart, ye cursed;" righteousness and kindness by the smile of His favour, followed by the welcome, "Come, ye blessed of my Father." And yet, notwithstanding this natural and judicial recompense of evil, and the natural and gracious recompense of good, evil men are not deterred from the commission of evil, nor are they constrained to do good. Although the recompense of evil is pain here and greater pain hereafter, and the recompense of good is pleasure here, and greater pleasure hereafter, yet man, unmoved by these considerations, persists in doing evil, and will not learn to do good. Oh the depravity and wickedness of the human heart! Need we wonder that God, speaking by the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah, should declare it to be "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked"? Desperate indeed must be its wickedness, when the fearful consequences of evil, and the blessed results of good, alike fail to influence the heart to forsake the evil, and to cleave to the good.

And yet, forsooth, there are men who tell us that the heart is not wicked, that it needs no radical

change; that regeneration is a doctrine of a bygone age, not to be for a moment entertained in this age of progress and enlightenment; that it is now obsolete, and should be looked upon as an old fossil, which belongs to the past, and not to the present. What! we say to these *pseudo* philosophers, the heart of man not deceitful? Whence then comes all the deceit that abounds in the world? The heart of man not wicked? Whence then comes all the wickedness that prevails in the world? Streams and rivers must have their rise somewhere; and if the streams of deceit and the rivers of wickedness which flow through the world have not their rise in the human heart, from whence come they? "We speak as unto wise men." We wait your reply.

It is bad enough to see *writers* deny the deceitfulness and wickedness of the human heart; it is worse still when *preachers* occupying sanctuary pulpits either ignore or deny the fact. Yes, there are preachers who tell their audiences that they are all God's dear children; that He loves them very much; that without shedding of blood there is remission of sins; that they have only to ask the Great Father to forgive them, and their sins will be all forgiven them; that they have no need to trouble themselves with the old, worn-out doctrines of atonement by blood, regeneration by the Holy Spirit, and justification by faith. Knowing, as we do, that these great cardinal doctrines of Christianity are openly denied by certain public teachers

whose only call to the ministry is their own pride of intellect, or of heart, we lift up the voice of warning—we say, “Beware of these men.” They are “blind leaders of the blind;” and be assured that, for their heresies which they unblushingly preach, and the fearful and fatal consequences which follow, “The God of recompences shall surely requite.”

F A M I N E .

JER. lii. 6: "The famine was sore in the city, so that there was no bread for the people of the land."

BREAD is the gift of God. This is a fact so obvious to every man of reflection, as scarcely to need illustration or proof. The origin of food, like the origin of man, must, from the very nature of the case, have been *Divine*. The *first* grain of wheat which was sown in the earth could not have proceeded from another grain, or it would not have been *the first*. The first of every kind of food, be that food animal or vegetable, and from which all subsequent supplies have resulted, could only have been brought into existence by the creative and miraculous power of God.

But not only is bread the gift of God because, in the first instance, it was the product of His creative power, and not as now the result of growth. It is His gift, in that its very growth is the result of the operation of His laws, called "nature's laws." Let these laws be suspended; let there be no rain for three years and six months, and the sower might sow, but no harvest could he reap. Thus Reason and Revelation alike testify that fruitful seasons and plenteous harvests come from God. In other words, it is God who gives to man his daily bread.

Now, as bread is the gift of God, this gift is sometimes withholden from a people as a punishment for their sins. For judicial reasons, God sometimes breaks the whole staff of bread, and sends a famine into a city or throughout a land. This He does in one of two ways, either by successive failures in the crops, the earth no longer yielding her increase; or by permitting an invading army to invest and besiege a city. The famine in Egypt was occasioned by seven years' failure in the crops, as predicted by Joseph, to whom the fact was revealed by God in a dream. The famine in Canaan in the time of Ahab was the result of a three years and six months' drought, during which time there was neither rain nor dew. The famine in Jerusalem was caused by a state of siege: an invading army had surrounded it at all points, demanding its capitulation; but the city was unwilling to surrender, it held out until the food was utterly exhausted, "So the famine was sore in the city, and there was no bread for the people."

Very striking are the points of resemblance between the city of Jerusalem in the time of Zedekiah, and the city of Paris in the time of Napoleon III. In the reign of Zedekiah, "Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, came, he and all his army, and pitched against it, and built forts against it round about, so the city was besieged." In the reign of Napoleon III., William, King of Prussia, "came, he and all his army, against Paris, and pitched against it, and built forts against it round about, so the city was besieged;" and owing to the length of the siege, which extended

over five months, "the famine was sore in the city, and there was no bread for the people." Thus He who gives bread can take it away; and He does take it away when a land like Egypt becomes tyrannical and oppressive, or a city like Jerusalem or Paris forgets God, lives in defiance of His authority, and tramples under foot laws sacred and Divine.

When cities thus fall into moral guilt and depravity their days are numbered, and their doom is sealed. "Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord." With expressions of His anger and sore displeasure He visited Jerusalem. Not only was the famine sore in the city; the city itself was broken up, and all the men of war fled: the king was taken prisoner, his eyes were put out, he was cast into prison, and in prison he died. With expressions of His anger and sore displeasure He has visited France; for not only was the famine sore in the city of Paris, the city itself was desolated, the emperor was taken prisoner, and the valiants of his army were either slain or taken prisoners. Thus the dealings of God towards Paris, *Anno Domini* 1870-71, were not unlike His dealings towards Jerusalem in the days of Zedekiah the king. "Verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth."

In the terrible wars which have desolated cities and laid waste a whole country, superficial observers may see only the hand of man; but more profound thinkers and devout readers of the word of God, will see the hand of God. The prophet Isaiah, speaking under Divine inspiration, says: "The nation and kingdom that will not serve Thee shall

perish ; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted." And God, after charging Israel with manifold sins and multiplied transgressions, says, "Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" God, then, does at times "come forth out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the world for their iniquity." Sometimes the punishment takes the form of war, with all its horrors ; at other times it is the pestilence, with all its terrors ; and then it is the famine, with all its pining suffering : and in these punishments we see that there are times when God deals with men after their sins, and rewards them according to their iniquities. True, God is a God of grace ; but grace has not destroyed justice. "Justice and judgment are still the habitation of His throne."

"The famine was sore in the city." As we read this sad calamity which came upon Jerusalem, and which befell Paris during the late war, we turn our thoughts towards a city called the Heavenly Jerusalem, where no famine is known, no, nor ever will be. Of the denizens of that city we read, "They shall hunger no more, neither shall they thirst any more." Paul and many of the glorified knew the pain of hunger and thirst while here : there they know it no more. Here also they hungered and thirsted after that righteousness and purity which they saw and admired in their much-loved Lord. Such longings are now satisfied ; for they are not only *with* Him, but are *like* Him : they "see Him as He is," and are now in relation to Christ what Christ was in relation to the Father, "the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person ;" hence their

hunger is for ever appeased, their thirst for ever slaked.

O beautiful city ! Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole universe, is Mount Zion. It is a city whose builder and maker is God. A city which lies beyond the reach of all besiegers, be they Satanic or human. A city whose beauty and glory will never fade—

“ Its beauty is for ever vernal,
Its glory is the glory of its king ;
Undying, incorruptible, eternal,
And ever new the songs its dwellers sing.”

It is a city sacred to the holy ; for “ nothing can enter there that defileth, that worketh abomination, or maketh a lie.” Over its gates of pearl is written, in legible characters, the notice, “ NO ADMITTANCE EXCEPT TO THE HOLY.”

It is a city of everlasting light, resounding with everlasting song—

“ Heaven were no heaven if its dear light could fade,
If its fair glory could hereafter wane ;
If its sweet skies could suffer stain or shade,
Or its soft breezes waft one note of pain.”

Blessed be God, its light can never fade, its glory can never wane, its skies can never cloud, and its breezes can waft no pain. “ Fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore.” Such is heaven—the future home of the saints, the present abode of the glorified.

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